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felt; he consoled his  
nary strength of mind  
upon Angus. And  
marriage, the true fa-  
whether his child was  
allowed to attempt.  
good deal surprised, but  
and some anxiety, and  
to come, and talk to him

"My dear Edith," said  
we are to have friends.  
You would rather be  
Lord Reinecourt, and  
events will explain for  
dear child?"

"Oh, no!" Edith answered  
not. I can't help feeling  
suppose, papa. It is a  
Edith can't get on.

must come,—and so the  
court and their son Duke  
and Mr. Stangrove.

They came rather early  
though she had that morning  
that had not arrived, with  
"behaved herself," as  
wished to praise her much.

The time for dressing  
appeared in the drawing-  
mirror reflected her, as  
proud dames whose garments  
dress was faintest pink,  
blushed as she moved. Her  
Grecian statue's, had ivy leaves  
door opens, and she looks to  
carriage drive up, and she  
but Angus enters quickly, say-  
ing her a thousand times.

She tries to move—to ex-  
his manner.





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**EDITH MORTIMER,**

*&c.*





EDITH MORTIMER;

OR,

The Trials of Life

AT

MORTIMER MANOR.

BY

MRS. PARSONS,

AUTHOR OF

"THORNBERRY ABBEY," "WELL KNOWN TO THE POLICE,"

"JOE BAKER," ETC. ETC.



LONDON:

CHARLES DOLMAN, 61, NEW BOND STREET;  
AND 22, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1857.

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**This Story,**

**WRITTEN AT THE SUGGESTION OF**

**LADY CHARLES THYNNE,**

**FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT OF HER DAUGHTER,**

**IS NOW,**

**In Memory of many Pleasant Hours,**

**DEDICATED TO THEM**

**BY**

**THE AUTHOR.**



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EDITH MORTIMER;  
OR,  
THE TRIALS OF LIFE.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

It is a frosty evening in November. The young moon gives a clear light, and the stars are glorious above. It is about eight o'clock. I imagine myself going up a steep hill in a secluded part of the country, and so advancing upon the house of whose young mistress I am going to tell you. On the left-hand side a wall of rock rises. In barbarous times the road ascended to the summit of this rock; our grandfathers cut the present way, and so enabled wheeled vehicles to go where only pack-horses had trod before. From that moment the village of Steeple-hill became a rising place, and around the ancient Manor-house rose other dwellings, but of modest character, and at respectful distances. Now, as we go up this hill this frosty evening, the high elm-trees have their shadows painted black upon that rocky side, and loose stones on the pathway shine like silver at their feet. The clear light of the spangled sky makes the road white before us, and the tread of our feet rings out with a cheerful sound. But just at the summit of the hill, suddenly, a darkness falls. Ilixes and yew-trees take the place of the high road-side elms. A towering wall protects them, but they hang over in massive density, and shade the gateway between its huge granite pillars, so that you ought to



know well where the entrance lies before you venture to turn in to the Manor-house, even on a starlight night.

There are other houses in the village. The baker's, the brewer's, the doctor's, and the rival houses of the two attorneys—for one attorney never flourished in any place. There is also Mr. Flasher's house, and Mrs. Bright's—the rich widow. And Parson Trotman's; and Farmer Reeves's, who sells milk and butter, eggs, bacon, and cheese, to everybody, and pays his rent “like a man,” it is said, to the squire's steward, who is called Mr. Norman, and to whom everybody touches the hat, or offers a hand, or makes a curtsy, or smiles graciously, as the case may be. For a long time the family of Norman lived at the Manor-house. From father to son the stewardship had descended for many generations, and in the old Manor-house they had lived ever since the owner had inherited a magnificent property elsewhere. But lately a change had come: a new house had been built, and Mr. and Mrs. Norman had gone to live in it. Nobody knew why,—Mr. Norman was not a man of many words, and Mrs. Norman either did not know, or had triumphantly vindicated her sex, by showing that she could keep a secret.

What in the world was going to be done with the Manor-house? This question was asked every day for at least three months, by every man, woman, and child of any 'cuteness, at Steeple-hill,—but no answer came. Mr. Norman was constantly asked; and his answers were various: “Going to varnish the oak; going to take the yellow wash off the granite; going to have the old pictures cleaned; going to have that great piece of tapestry mended; going to give the old place a thorough washing.” Yet when the testing words, “But why?” were uttered, he always found out that he must go away, and went accordingly.

Mr. and Mrs. Flasher and their five daughters had never been so puzzled in all their lives. Mr. and Mrs. Trotman said that it was not respectful of Mr. Norman to make so great a mystery of it. The surgeon's wife said that what she had always hoped for was “a crisis.” She had felt sure that Steeple-hill would wake up to life at

last. "But what life is there in all this soap-and-water, and turpentine, and dismal dust-raising?" asked Mrs. Vine, of the "George and Dragon." "If I see a sign hung out, then I shall say there is life, and death too, to one of us, but—" "Treason, defamation, slander, and calumny! Keep a civil tongue in your head, Mrs. Vine," said Mr. Bliss, the lawyer. And Mr. Honey, his brother-in-law, passing by at that moment, said, "Good advice, Mrs. Vine!" which, that lady observed, she never could forget to the latest day of her life, for those two had never before been heard to agree together in public, since they first entered Steeple-hill.

But still the wonder grew. After the things mentioned by Mr. Norman had been accomplished, stranger things appeared: huge waggons, and many of them, and all full of furniture. The unpacking was awful, for such things had never been seen by Steeple-hill eyes before. Furniture most unsuited to the style and fashion of the charming old Manor-house, was carried within its walls, and lighted up its desolate chambers. The furniture consisted of the necessaries of life, not of modern gimcracks, or fashionable follies: beds and wardrobes, dressing-tables and chests of drawers, chairs, tables, sofas, book-cases,—that was nearly all, but all were of a gorgeous splendour. The village upholsterer put up ruby-coloured satin damask in what had been Mrs. Norman's back-parlour. In the children's sunny play-room there was blue satin, and white enamel chairs with legs and backs touched up with gold. The old cabinets, carved chests, heavy tables, and great high-backed chairs, now mingled with the new magnificence, and made people's hair stand on end. The wonder and curiosity of Steeple-hill was at fever-height. The only consolation of the ladies was to say, "Somebody is coming, and we shall call."

But there was still more to wonder at. A large room which had been used for a brewery, and the further end of which had been made into a beer-cellar, was restored to its original dimensions. The entrance, which was from the court-yard, had been beautified, and made safe by double doors; and an entrance from the house which had

been closed up and papered over, was re-opened,—but why, no one knew. There stood this great long room, very dreary and cold-looking, and yet grand, for there was a majesty about the carved timbers of its ancient roof. The room through which you entered it from the house had now been hung with pictures; and when a drapery was drawn back, and the door, thus disclosed, was opened,—how awful that huge place of emptiness looked. Its great cold area, and its obtrusively got-up, and newly-polished roof,—what was the meaning of it? An answer came.

One fine autumn day all Steeple-hill held its breath, as it were, for there walked through its broad and peaceful central way, Mr. Norman and another. Mr. Norman had brought him to his house in a gig, and now walked with him through Steeple-hill just as if it was nothing at all. He was an old man, tall and very upright; he walked firmly, though he used a stick. He had knee-breeches, and buckles on his shoes. He had a longish coat, and a broad-brimmed hat. He was evidently the possessor of a remarkable-looking cloak, with certain cords and tassels unseen in Steeple-hill before, which Mr. Norman carried respectfully for him on his arm. He had a fresh-coloured face; and when he paused beneath the Manor-house gateway he took off his hat and showed that his hair was thin and perfectly white. Of course he ought to have gone in at the front door, but he did not. He and Mr. Norman went to the yard, and entered, by the outer door, that great and dreary apartment. In a moment the truth was known. Workmen were ready to receive his orders. It was to be a chapel, a Catholic chapel; he was a priest, and worse, a bishop; and Mr. Norman called him, "My Lord."

Again he walked through Steeple-hill, again he was in the gig, and Mr. Norman drove him away. But when Mr. Norman got back he was besieged with questions. The workmen from the chapel had told it all at the George and Dragon, and Mrs. Vine had wondered that they had not fainted. From that house it had spread to every kitchen in Steeple-hill; from the kitchens it had reached the par-

lours, the nurseries, and even the sacred privacy of Mr. Trotman's study, into which Mrs. Trotman rushed, and,—  
“My dear, the Manor-house has been got ready for a Roman Catholic, they are getting ready the chapel, a popish bishop was among us to-day; it is the most infamous underhand plot, just like them; I wonder we did not see it from the beginning!”

Mr. Trotman was not a very quick man,—he really had to collect his senses before he could take in what his wife so rapidly gave out. She had to begin again. She went back to their early life. Mr. Trotman, it must now be said, was the son of a successful surgeon, in the neighbouring village of Woodlands. He was more of a gentleman in manner than most of his family, and was an upright man, fully intending to do all the good in his power, but without a particle of theological knowledge. He was the mere slave of Protestant tradition. As might be expected, he was a good deal flustered.

“I am sure that if I had known we were ever to have such a trial as this, I should never have voted you out of your father's surgery. Little enough we thought of this when we came here, and a priest living in the Manor-house; of course, I shall be miserable every time I go outside the gates—why, I never saw a Papist in my life!”

During this speech Mr. Trotman seemed to have come to a resolution. He rose up; took one turn across the room, and then stood before his wife. “I'll preach them such a sermon on Sunday, as shall make this interloper sick of Steeple-hill before he sees it.”

“Ay, ay, — Mr. Trotman,” said his judicious spouse, whom nothing could appease; “but these people are powerful. What's the use of stirring up a party against us in the village?”—“Powerful,” repeated Mr. Trotman. “Why, gracious me, yes; haven't you seen the things in the house? There's a table, in the oriel window in —”

“I'll go and consult Norman!” said Mr. Trotman. His wife, longing to hear if there was anything more to know, agreed gladly to this proposition, and putting hat and stick into her husband's hand, went herself to the school-room, where her two little girls were at their lessons

with Miss Trimmer. Miss Trimmer said that Mr. Mortimer, the squire and the owner of the Manor-house, must be a dreadful man to allow a Catholic tenant to live in that dear old place. Mrs. Trotman agreed to this. "*He*,—he cares nothing about Steeple-hill, or anything else. He was a pleasant man, years ago. But he lives at that great splendid place, Menadarva, and what does he care about, us——"

"My dear, my dear," cried her husband, entering the room in an almost breathless state, "It's he himself, — it's Mr. Mortimer himself — Sir Godfrey I mean, — hu——sh" The "*hush*" drew attention to the sound of wheels. They looked from the window; an open travelling carriage with post-horses was passing at the moment. A gentleman in it returned the salutations of those he passed, by taking his hat off. "It is Mr. Mortimer, it really is; and that lady by his side, —why, it can't be little Edith grown to that?"

"I believe it is," said Mrs. Trotman. "How lovely! There they go through the gateway,—and Mr. Mortimer a convert; a man of his years too—and buried his wife!' Mrs. Trotman was not a very close reasoner. But she went on. "And old Sir Geoffrey only buried last month. But if that is Edith, she is downright beautiful. Why the village won't be the same place. What will the country come to; and, my goodness, Mr. Trotman, how shall we manage on the next fifth of November?"



## CHAPTER II.

## THE HOUSE OF MORTIMER.

"WHAT'S in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." No such thing. Juliet was in love. "What's Montague?" she asks—why, it is not Hobson, or Bobson, or Snigg.—And that is everything. Now, Sir Godfrey Mortimer would not have been called anything else for all the world. In an up-lifted sort of way, he was splendidly and serenely thankful that he bore his own name.

It is just possible, if there be such a creature in the world as a genealogist who is not a poet, that such a being may say, that there has not been, at least of late years, any baronet so called—and that it is a serious thing to take so great a name for so slight a purpose as this story. I cannot answer such a monster. I claim Sir Godfrey Mortimer. He shall be the captive of my quill and my penknife, as bows and spears are out of fashion, and I will have the unblazonable coat with him.

I mean no disrespect to anybody—not, in the first place, to that highest Personage, who has the power of quartering the coat of Mortimer, nor to his Grace the Duke of Buckingham, nor to any other of England's great nobility, who wear barruly of six, or and azure, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But I must have my own way with these Mortimers. My hero, Sir Godfrey, is sitting, in deep thought, in an amber-coloured easy-chair, in what had been called Mrs. Norman's back-parlour, but which now was called the dining-room. The chair was drawn to the edge of the rug; the fire blazed brightly, and standing by it, and leaning against the huge granite chimney-piece, was Edith.

Dear imaginative reader, have you ever loved wood and stone? If you have not, or could not, you can never understand Edith. She stood there, and leaned her small beautiful head against the hard, cold, glittering, unpainted, and ungilded stone, and loved it dearly. The stone reached from the hearth to the stuccoed ceiling. Far above where Edith's hand could reach, there stood out a little ledge; but there must have been giant forms in the days when it was of any use. And above the ledge, stretching up to the ceiling, and looking down, grandly, with an air of protection, was the coat of arms, which a hundred heroes had borne, and which had been in every battle-field, upon the victor's side. The severe ornaments of ancient architecture surrounded it, and came down in quatrefoils and crosses on each side of the fire-place. And against them leant Edith with a heart full of fondness, and a soul swelling with sweet and solemn thoughts.

What was Edith like? She was exactly like her own name. Forgive me, then, if, for the sake of the uninitiated, I say, that she had very dark hair, yet not absolutely black; fine, distinct, pencilled eye-brows, and eyes which you were a little,—just a little surprised to find not quite so dark as such hair demanded. Her complexion was fair, and rather pale when she was not speaking; but the colour came and went, for Edith was young, and full of feeling. At this time, as she leans against the chimney-piece, she is slight, and not tall, but she is only sixteen, and, perhaps, she has not done growing—and, although she is a Mortimer, she is the image of what her beautiful mother was at that young age. She is dressed in black silk, and it hangs full and heavy on the ground with its deep *crêpe* trimmings. It reaches up to her throat, but arms, which might have been a sculptor's models are only slightly shrouded in the *crêpe* of her hanging sleeves.

Her father rises up. He is a Mortimer from head to foot. He is fair, with full blue eyes, and very light hair, which curls beautifully. He has a form of great height and power, with the most beautiful feet and hands in the world. He is thirty-seven years of age, and looks ten years younger. He is a real hero, in his dark-haired

daughter's romantic heart. He has been six months a widower, and a month ago his father died.

He rises up and speaks—"Edith."

"Yes, papa." Edith privately kisses the rude quatrefoil, and advances to her father's side. He passes his arm round her, smiles on her lovingly for a moment, then releasing her, he speaks again—

"Edith, shall you be happy here?"

"Happy! O papa!" she glances round on the panelled and pictured walls; she thinks of the great stone mullioned window, which stretches out behind the drawn damask curtain; she sees the carved stone, and drops gently into a high-backed chair, as modern as Queen Elizabeth, and says again—"Happy! O yes, *perfectly* happy, papa."

"You know that we are poor, Edith?"

"Oh yes, papa," with rather a puzzled tone.

"Do you think you know what poverty means?"

"I can guess, papa. I think——"

"Well?"

Edith does not speak for a moment, but then says with a sigh,—

"Mrs. Tartlet is going to-morrow to Sir George Grandison's?"

"Yes."

"I am so sorry."

"And you, Edith, are to be your father's housekeeper."

Sir Godfrey smiles, and Edith, getting up, puts her hand on his arm, and, looking very beautiful, says that she shall like it very much.

"Have you a pencil and some paper there?"

"Yes, papa."

She takes from an ivory box an atom of a gold pencil-case, and produces a little musk-smelling note, on the envelope of which she prepares to write.

"You know what luxury is—it is what I had a few weeks since. Menadarva and its broad lands, and an income that flowed in like a river of gold."

Edith laughs.

"And yet, even in my childish recollections, I loved—or I *honoured* this house most."



"It is the home of our ancestors; I do not know that a Mortimer could be better anywhere else. But power, place, influence is gone with Menadarva, and I stand here by myself, with my jewel of a child, and only eight hundred a year. Now, Edith, I want you to learn how much that is. Sitting in the chair, I thought of a way of showing you. Of course the house must be kept in good repair."

"Oh, yes."

"Say £30 a year, then."

Edith writes down the sums her father mentions.

"Coals and candles, £50."

Edith gives an involuntary shudder, but she writes it down.

"Odds and ends, £20. And can you dress for £50?"

"I'll try, papa."

"Very well—your dress and mine, £100. Then your maid, and the housemaid, and the cook, and the kitchen-maid—we shall not want a dairy,—their wages, £60. And old Masters, £50; and William, £20; and the groom, £20; and gardener and woman, £75; and occasional help, £15; and food for horses, £100; and taxes, £80; and food for four women and three men, £200; and another £100 for you and me and an occasional guest; and cellar, £20; and washing, £60."

"Yes, papa, I should think that would do," said Edith.

"Well, then, add it up."

"Oh, papa—it is a thousand a year."

"Yes, my darling; which is three hundred a year more than I should like to spend. Now, keep that paper till to-morrow, and bring it to me with such things left out as you can spare, and we will talk it over again."

The next morning Edith came with her paper. Her father stood up, and, keeping her by his side, looked it through.

"Very well, Edith. It begins, as all good things should begin, with self-sacrifice. Your clothes, £30; no maid; no horse for yourself; one man-servant less. Yes, we might do this—or——" He paused, and then said "or" again,—and then, looking at his attentive child, said "or" once more, and a most emphatic *or* it was!

"What is the alternative, papa?"

"I would not do anything to make you the least uncomfortable for the world; but I don't want to see that beloved brow lined with care. Saving, if you don't know how to do it, is full of trouble. But, as a matter of fact, eight hundred a year is quite enough for you and me—the only disadvantage being that we have been accustomed to twice as many thousands. Now, I have an idea that Lady Sarah Tregenna would live with us if I asked her to do so. You might learn housekeeping from her."

Edith's face brightened. "I should like it very much," she said firmly. "Very much,—very much indeed, papa. I am sure she will come. She was always so kind to me. And she will match this house exactly."

Sir Godfrey laughed heartily. Edith laughed a little too; but she was firm to her opinions, and they were remarkable opinions—such as these: Aunt Sarah was stiff; stony; medieval; not easily managed; unlike all other people. But then, she was distinguished, sensible, protecting, sincere, faithful. She was like the old chimney-piece,—like a picture in a carved oak frame without any gilding,—like an illuminated book of devotions. She ought to have been called Gwendaline; and she looked like the Victoria Regia, thorns and all. "But before it had that stupid name" says Edith, earnestly—"when it was lonely, untalked of by the staring world, in its native waters, with its still look, and wide-open, waiting, watchful eye, so strongly rooted, so firmly floating on life's waves, so pure, so beautiful, so—— so——"

Edith stops, for her father has said "Go, on;" and he is looking very naughty,—but she smiles and kisses him, and says, "So excessively odd, papa!"

He laughs: "You little enthusiast,—shall I write to her then?"

"Directly, dear papa,—and let me write too."

"What shall you say?"—"That I shall break my heart if she does not come."

"Oh, sixteen!" exclaimed Sir Godfrey, "How could I have thought that my fanciful child was fit to keep accounts?"

Edith had put writing materials before her father, and he began to write,—

“MY DEAR LADY SARAH.”—We will read the letter by and by, we must preface it by a further account of the house of Mortimer.

About fifty years before the writing of this letter, there had lived a Welsh heiress of fabulous wealth, and indescribable beauty. She had married at twenty-one, Lord Tregenna; and her only child by that marriage was Lady Sarah. Her second husband had been the late Sir Godfrey Mortimer, and the present Sir Godfrey had been the only child of the second marriage. Lady Sarah was seven years older than her half-brother; and she had always been a Catholic, as Sir Godfrey’s mother had been. But Sir Godfrey did not recollect his mother, she had died when he was an infant. Lady Sarah had not lived at Menadarva after her mother’s death, and the brother and sister had not seen a great deal of each other, only enough to make Edith think of her as has been said.

Sir Godfrey now writes,—

“DEAR LADY SARAH,—You know a good deal of what has happened, but perhaps not all. You know that my father displeased at my becoming a Catholic, altered his will, and that I have, in consequence, inherited the entailed property only. This is not much trouble to a man who saw his wife die happily, strengthened by the sacraments; and whose daughter is an *exceedingly old* Catholic already. I always think we owe a great deal to your prayers,—and to my dear mother. I know the anguish of her death-bed on my account, it has found its answer now. When my father sent for me, he was unable to transact business—my name, repeated at intervals for hours together, made the people about him aware of what he wished. When I came to him, he made signs that he would write, — showed great pleasure at the sight of his will,—found himself unable to make the alterations he certainly desired to make, and clasping my hand with sobs and anguished looks, he died. But I was restored to his love. He kissed my crucifix,—pointed to our mother’s picture, and I believe,

understood much of what I said to him at that awful hour.

"He is gone, and as to the loss of one property, I never intend to regret it. But I am friendless. That is, when I look at my darling Edith, I feel friendless. You will guess why. I want you to have pity on her, and come to us. What she wants to learn of woman's duties, you could teach her. A guiding hand for a year or too will save me anxiety, and be an inestimable advantage to her. If you had not given up living at Tregenna, I would not ask this. But at least you will come for a visit, and I believe that Edith will persuade you to stay."

Lady Sarah's answer was in these words:—

"MY DEAR BROTHER,—I shall be with you on Tuesday next. I received your note just as I was packing up, intending to go to London. It will be Steeple-hill. I beg Edith's pardon—Mortimer Manor,—instead of London now. I leave everything I have to say till we meet.

"Your affectionate Sister,

"SARAH BEATRICE TREGENNA."

"Tuesday is to-morrow!" exclaimed Edith with clasped hands, as she finished the note.

"Quite true," said Sir Godfrey.

"Oh, I am so glad!" said Edith, her eyes full of tears. "Ever since I have thought of her coming, I have wanted her every moment."

"Don't be too sanguine, Edith. Lady Sarah has her peculiarities. You may not get on as well as you expect. She may not choose to stay; she is unyielding. Even I myself, not having seen her for above two years, and having been then a Protestant, scarcely know how we shall get on. She has always had my highest, my most unqualified respect, but I almost think that we have yet to learn to love."

Edith had been looking earnestly in her father's face,—  
"That is very natural for you—but I don't feel so. When I was a little child, she was my mystery: as I grew older, she was my romance; and now I will have her for my

most tender friend. I know her very well. I *feel* that I know her."

The next day came. Edith went half a dozen times into the bed-room Lady Sarah was to occupy. She poked the fire, she looked around. She put small vases of flowers before the altar she had made out of an old heavy little table. She wanted the room to look very Catholic. It was panelled with bright oak. Our Blessed Lady and St. Aloysius adorned the walls. But her last visit was interrupted by the approach of wheels.

"She is come," said Edith's heart; and she flew downstairs. She stood in the hall,—they had not reached the door; she ran into the library: "Papa, hark!" And then her heart beat almost audibly. She had never welcomed any one by herself before. Yes, *by herself*—for she wanted her mother's presence. Her heart cried out for what it could never find again, and she dropped sobbing into the chair her father had left. In another instant she rose up, for through the open door entered the tall figure of Lady Sarah, alone. Sir Godfrey was giving directions, and paying the post-boys, so Lady Sarah walked in by herself.

"Edith!" It was a wonderful voice—more felt than heard.

"Edith!" And then the soft brown eyes darted a sudden fire, and she advanced quickly to where the trembling girl held by the table, and could not trust herself to move.

"Edith," she said, "perhaps the happiness of our lives may depend upon this moment: *I think you are sorry that I am come.*"

"Oh, truthful Aunt Sarah!" exclaimed Edith; and in an instant she was in her arms, and a little laugh mingled with her sob. "No, no—but this is the first time—I cannot say it; but oh,—*you* know."

The loving arms folded her closely. A quiet kiss was left upon her cheek.

"May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace." Soft and fervent came the words, and they dropped into Edith's heart, and she wept on unreprieved.

"I could not have had a sweeter welcome," said Lady Sarah. "The purest gift of our heart is confidence: you have made me an offering, and I know how to value it; and we shall love each other the better for this."

So Edith made no apology; but at her own time answered her aunt with smiles, and again grew bright and fanciful, and watched Lady Sarah till night came, when she had learnt every feature and every movement by heart, and then went to rest wondering, and satisfied, and happy.



## CHAPTER III.

## LADY SARAH TREGENNA'S FIRST DAY AT THE MANOR.

Two minutes before the breakfast-time, Edith was standing by the ebony cabinet at the head of the stairs, and thinking to herself, "Shall I knock at Aunt Sarah's door?" In another moment she had entered the room and given Lady Sarah her morning welcome. The fire was lighted; the lady sat at a table near it; on this table were parcels of papers bound with red tape, and a roll of parchment, and pens and ink, and several sorts of writing-paper, and a long account-book; and Lady Sarah looked as if it was mid-day instead of nine in the morning. Within Edith's heart rose a mysterious feeling of wonder.

"I want you to tell Martha you are glad to see her."

"Your maid?" exclaimed Edith; "Is she here? I don't know anything about her."

"She stood by your grandmother's—my mother's—dying bed."

"Oh, then I can say so with all my heart."

"Martha!" cried Lady Sarah.

The woman came from the inner room. She was nearly sixty years of age.

"I have great pleasure in seeing you," said Edith, fixing her eyes on the woman's face, as if she could read a history there. "You have never been here before?"

"I was here once, ma'am, before Sir Godfrey was born; I was here for two months."

"Here before papa was born! Oh, we shall have so much to say to each other. Oh, Martha, I am so glad to see you."

"Yes, miss, I was here for two months. My mistress was six years old, and she had the measles here, and lay

in this very room. Dear me, I remember the picture there as if it was but yesterday—Sir Montague, over the fire-place. And I have been inquiring if anybody knows anything about the doctor that attended my lady. He must be very old; but she was dreadfully ill, and he treated her—”

Her hearer cares nothing for the doctor.

“The second bell!” exclaimed Edith; and she ran off, and Lady Sarah looked after her with a smile.

“Oh dear, what a nice young lady,” said Martha; “so beautiful, so kind, so humble.”

Lady Sarah walked down-stairs.

Lady Sarah had a dim recollection of the place. It was more like the memory of some strange story told to her childish ears, than a real visit to a real house. It came back pleasantly to her now, and made her look on its young mistress with an increased interest, for the heart was warm and the imagination vigorous, though she did step with a tread which, though not loud, made you think of strength and courage, and an unyielding will.

At breakfast Sir Godfrey asked his sister why she had not brought a man-servant.

“Oh, she had brought him as far as she wanted him. Old Jeremy was a sort of house-steward now, and he had gone back to Tregenna. Martha was perfect,—she had brought her.”

“How did the tenants go on at the Castle?”

“Quite charmingly: did not trouble the people at all. In fact, were just the sort of people—as Catholics were not to be had—to put into the old Castle.”

“What kind of people could they be?”

“They were Quakers, with large views of sobriety, cleanliness, and industry, and no particular views about anything else; kind to the poor Catholics,—which is everything to me, you know,” said Lady Sarah.

“Quakers at old Tregenna!” said Edith.

Lady Sarah looked round with a droll smile.

“The brown clothes, and crimped caps, and straight bonnets look so queer, with a population of family pictures.



in all imaginable grandeur, and fantastical masquerade, looking down upon them," she said.

"But you must be shocked, Aunt Sarah."

"At their bad grammar? It would be more correct if they said *thou* sometimes, instead of eternally *thee*."

"I did not mean that," said Edith, very slowly, and feeling like a stone.

"What was your Quaker friend before he entered upon his magnificent retirement?" asked Sir Godfrey, knowing that Edith required to be relieved.

"I don't know,—something in Sheffield, I think; and his wife—friend Foxley's wife, was"—she looked straight at Edith—"a button-sticker,—before she was married, I mean."

Edith was turned from stone to iron: she showed no sign of interest.

"It is a woman's trade, Edith, in Sheffield and Birmingham."—Edith lifted up her half-inquiring and, otherwise, meaningless eyes to Lady Sarah's face, when her name was spoken.—"It means those girls who are employed in putting the buttons through those little holes which they make in the cards upon which we buy them."

Edith sighed out, "Oh!"

Sir Godfrey rose to leave the breakfast-room.

"Show me the way, dear child," said Lady Sarah,—so tenderly she said it.

As Edith passed her father, he whispered, "She is still your mystery, I think." But Edith walked on patiently. She opened the door of the morning-room.

"Delightful,—what a house it is!" exclaimed Lady Sarah.

Edith smiled: in a moment she was warmed into life.

"You love me better now, Edith?" The answer was a kiss.

Still, throughout the day the young girl watched her aunt; making a study of her; considering the light in those quiet, searching, understanding brown eyes, and wondering why her complexion was so very like ivory; and pleased to recall the moments when that pale cheek had glowed, not with the blushes of the young, but with

the warm light of an intense but controlled emotion ; and yet vexing herself because this admired aunt said what she called odd, hard, unpalatable things. "I want," said Edith, to herself, in one of those communings which she called "her heart speaking to her head,"—"I want to get close to her for protection ; I want to tell her all I feel and think,—I know she understands my whole heart,—and yet I can't. Why are we so much alike, and yet so very different ?"

"Papa,"—she spoke aloud now,—"**Papa, was Aunt Sarah ever handsome ?**"

"Oh yes, my dear, very.—No, not exactly handsome, perhaps ; indeed, I hardly know. Here she comes !"

"Sarah," said Sir Godfrey, who had been in a rather listless mood all morning, "I wish you could teach us to be popular here."

"A very laudable desire," said Lady Sarah.

"What a dreadful idea," said Edith.

"When we returned the people's calls," said Sir Godfrey, "we entered the houses like an east wind, and froze the inhabitants into icicles."

"*You* did ?" laughed Lady Sarah, looking at her brother's beaming face.

Edith felt conscience-stricken, and blushed, and then drew up, and walked to the window lazily, and not perfectly well pleased.

At this moment the door was opened, and the ancient and grey-headed old Catholic butler of the lost Menadarva, announced, with a more than usual degree of solemnity,—

"Mrs. Flasher !" He might have said, "and the five Miss Flashers," but he allowed them to speak for themselves.

Edith felt half-suffocated in a forest of green velvet, wreathed with pomegranates. She advanced to meet Mrs. Flasher, feeling cold, and queer, and not hearing anything quite distinctly ; conscious that Lady Sarah was looking at her, and wondering if her father's smile was radiant on his guests.

"I believe that I need not introduce *all* of my girls ; I know you have seen *some*, Miss Mortimer."

Six times Edith's hand had undergone the dreadful trial of a hearty shake, and six times she had been told that she looked very well,—for this estimable family had a partnership in ideas and talked in rounds. If number one said, "How well you look," then one after the other would say, "Yes, indeed." "But you always do;" "We always say so;" "Everybody remarks the same;" till the sixth and last said, "Uncommonly well, I'm sure;" and then all chimed in with a grand *finale* of "Yes"-es in chorus. It was all chaos worse confounded to Edith. She could never have told how those six chairs, on which the next minute the six ladies reposed, ever came forth from their places, or how she found herself seated by Hester Flasher, and wildly answering questions on matters she knew nothing about. And still the old chimney-piece looked stiff and severe, and the old walls seemed to echo of the past, and her great-great-grandmother, in her white wedding brocade, looked down with the unaltered smile of a hundred years.

"Well, how this room is altered;" "Who'd have thought it?" "Since we played blind-man's-buff here with the little Normans;" "But we might have expected it;" "I'm sure we have said it at home a hundred times"—then, the "Yes"-es in chorus.

Edith's spirit retreated into the innermost citadel of her heart of hearts. These people laughing and playing in *that* room, in the very presence of her ancestors—it was like profanity. She would not suffer them to talk as they pleased; she would say something to them; so, very stiffly,—

"It was necessary that some one should live here; and when my grandfather inherited Menadarva, he preferred living there."

"Oh yes, Menadarva;" "Yes, indeed, Menadarva;" "You must be so sorry about Menadarva;" "There is not a creature that doesn't pity you about that beautiful Menadarva;" "It must be very different to you now to what it was at Menadarva"—and here a chorus of sighs.

The hot stream rushed from her heart; she felt herself grow crimson over throat and face to the very roots of her

hair. Did everybody talk of "the difference"—did such people "pity"—pity her hero of a father—pity *him*! What right had *they* to talk of Menadarva? But it was beautiful, and it is gone! And there is a difference; and a crowd of the hollow friends that grow up in prosperity have made them feel the difference—and Edith's heart cried out, "Why can't we live alone?—are we three, and our few faithful servants, not world enough—why should these intrude?" She rose up; there was an unusual stateliness in her movements; she did not know that a round of admiration was passing behind her. She looked towards her father, and for, as it seemed, the first time in her life, he had no answering glance for her. Back went her heart in its loneliness to the home that was gone. The realities of life had all been there—the place she stood in was dream-land only. There was her birth-place, and there the home of early love. There still were the nurseries, the schoolroom, the room where she had watched her sick mother's smile. There, still, were the seats under the chesnut trees, and the garden she had called her own; the same merry children on the green, the same voices in the village. It took but a moment to call up the spectres of the pleasant past. Mechanically she opened a large book of prints which was on the table before her, and then she heard her aunt's voice; she had come to the rescue, and was encountering all five Miss Flashers with unruffled gentleness.

Edith heard it all. "Had they ever been abroad? No. Steeple-hill was a beautiful village; the manor quite the gem of the country. So perfect an old place; so very interesting. So often visited by strangers—antiquarians—archæological associations—only one or two left in the country—never saw such a thing in their lives." A sort of mockery of a smile came upon Edith's face. There was a general standing up. She was saying "Good bye" a great many times over, and then they were gone.

By Sir Godfrey's help Mrs. Flasher walked across the polished oak of the hall, and told her daughters to take care not to break their legs. The girls followed, laughing loudly, and saying it had been well scrubbed up since

Norman's time. And when Sir Godfrey returned, he said to Lady Sarah, "You have seen something of our society"—but he said it very good-naturedly, and showed no symptom of retreating from his intention of being "popular."

"Society," sighed Edith.

"Yes, society," repeated Lady Sarah, in her firmest tone; "we cannot live alone. Where we are, others are. They have their rights in us, and we our claims on them."

"Oh, my dear aunt," cried Edith, "my claims shall be settled directly. I yield them up, and without a consideration, real or fictitious, in return."

"If you were thrown off your horse on Mrs. Flasher's doorstep, I presume you would expect her to take you in."

"I should die if she did," said Edith, with unquestionable sincerity.

"You can't live on the summits of the mountains of High-and-Mightydom; so you had better be prudent, and descend," replied Lady Sarah.

"Let us take refuge in the Palace of Truth. You know that these people are odiously vulgar—you, yourself, my dear aunt—you think them utterly uninteresting."

"Oh, no; I never saw an uninteresting person. I don't believe in such a monster."

"Your world must be full of heroes and heroines."

"My world, Edith? say *the* world—there are more people in the world than Mortimers and Tregennas."

"Yes," said Sir Godfrey; "there's a nephew of Mrs. Bright's just come from India, with a wounded hand—listen, Edith, don't turn away—and he called on all the good mammas who had been civil in his boyhood, and left a card—'Captain Forrest;' and '*Unattached*' was in the corner—and all the young ladies went into fits. I shall call upon him to-morrow."

Lady Sarah laughed—laughed quite merrily: Edith had not heard her laugh before. Five minutes after, Sir Godfrey had whistled Flora and Dash and two or three more dogs to his side, and Edith watched him as he walked through the meadows, and flung himself with easy power over gates and railings. Lady Sarah had had her

walk, and Edith, worried and longing for the fresh outer air, dressed herself hastily, and flew to the garden-door: once inside those high enclosing walls, she felt like herself again, and free. There, on the wide gravel walk of the highest terrace, under the sheltering wall, she paced quickly up and down—up and down from the summer-house to the beehives, and from the beehives back again. She passed and repassed the sun-dial on its pedestal, which rose from the low parapet midway, and she looked beyond it out on a glorious hill-side of sloping fields and hanging-woods, which extended itself for miles, and she enjoyed the mingled feelings, of seclusion and loneliness, of liberty and command which rose within her.

Edith's cheek grew brighter, as the day grew colder towards its close. But at last she thought that she ought to go in, so she ran down the flights of steps, and gave only a passing smile to the garden, spread out in precise forms round the well, which formed the centre, unlocked the heavy door, passed through the "yew-tree corner," and was again in the now agreeable and luxurious warmth of the house. One instant she paused in the hall. The clock ticked loudly, there was not another sound. She ascended the staircase quickly, and stood within her own room. It was the most luxurious place imaginable. It sounds very grand to talk with indifference about tables and chairs, papers and painting—but it is mere talk, depend upon it. There is an education in them. They are our companions; we get good or evil out of them, and we can't help it. Edith had not arranged her room for herself—her father had got together all the things he thought would be "nice for Edith," and the result was perfect. Flinging off her bonnet, and dropping into a chair, before the fire, Edith asked herself with enthusiasm, what the loss of all things was to her? They had lost the world—let it go!—she had her own world. They had been, in a sense, thrust out of society—let that be too—she had friends of her own. They were no longer to take a part in the battle of life; they were to stand aside in future. "Yes, and despise the puny strife," said Edith's heart. "But—but," it went on, "we must *really* stand aside.

If we have left one set of scenes, we will not have others forced upon us. We are enough for ourselves, and we will be *alone*." And then came the dressing-bell, and the maid appeared, and speechlessly Edith sat, till the girl asked if she would wear a white flower in her hair, and the black lisse dress, for Sir Godfrey had brought a gentleman to dinner,—it was Captain Forrest. No, Edith would make no change. The dress of yesterday might serve for her robe of resignation—a gentle——How can papa ! rose up in her heart, and then she resigned herself.

But she would not go down stairs till the five-minute bell had sounded, after which it was a transgression to linger. So, as the sound died away, the drawing-room door opened, and Edith's tranquil beauty, arrayed in heavy mourning, entered, rather superbly. She looked at her father, when he spoke, and bowed to Captain Forrest, without looking, and then looked at her aunt, and absolutely started. Lady Sarah—drawn up to her full height, with the strange light in her beautiful eyes, and a touch of emotion on every feature, dressed in black velvet up to her throat, with a little cap, that defied criticism, mingling with her brilliant hair—Lady Sarah looked in her niece's eyes perfectly beautiful. But what or who had inspired her? Another minute, and Edith was following her father, and aunt, into the dining-room, on Captain Forrest's arm.

It was the first time that Edith had sat, with guests, at the head of her father's table. Whenever any circumstances seemed, as it were, to force Edith into her mother's place, it was as if the life within her was shaken. She felt so thankful to her aunt, who talked to Captain Forrest about his wounded hand, and so drew attention away from her. The gathering tears were dismissed without falling, and Edith was soon right again. Captain Forrest had seen a battle-field. He had helped to bury the dead, and nurse the wounded. He had also hunted jackalls, and killed tigers ; but he did not seem to have much to say to ladies. Edith scarcely spoke till she was again alone with her aunt.

"Aunt, you looked as if you had known Captain Forrest."

"Oh, no!"

"How did papa fall in with him?"

"Sir Godfrey heard a gun in the preserve."

"A poacher—horrible!"

"He apologized so handsomely."

"Oh, nonsense—not know the preserve!"

"He had leave to shoot on Mr. Flasher's farm, it joins this place, you know."

"I didn't know.—And so papa asked him to dinner!"

"Not exactly. He found that he had just come from Menadarva. Angus Macdonnel was in the same regiment. It was that, I think, that made him ask him here."

"I thought we had left it and *them*," said Edith, in a tone of anguish.

"*Them*," repeated Lady Sarah, with frigid coldness—

"*Them*, Edith? I thought you had never seen any of your Scotch cousins.—Should you not order coffee?"

Captain Forrest went away early. He had a letter to write. This is it—

"DEAR ANGUS,—My undying, unsleeping good luck, got me such an indignant remonstrance, for a mere mistake from your kinsman, Sir Godfrey, that we were mutually set upon apologizing. Then came names, and names of friends. I traded upon yours, and got asked to dinner. He is a splendid specimen of our nature, and there is a Lady Sarah Somebody there, with whom I have left my heart—and your cousin, about whom you used to be so sentimental, and of whom I promised to write, is small, and still, dark-haired, and not bad looking. Do you want to hear any more?—She won't do for you. My aunt sends you an invitation. The Duke of Broadlands' hounds meet twice a week, and there are plenty of foxes. I've got two horses, one is of my own buying; my aunt gave me the other, and she keeps them both. My groom of the stable is a hunch-back, half dwarf, half cripple; very 'cute. My aunt won't stand men-servants, but as this one is by profession a tailor, she endures him for his thimble's sake. I am making up my mind to lose the use of three fingers



on my right hand—it's a good deal to do, so think tenderly of

"Your faithful friend,

"HENRY FORREST."

When Edith walked up stairs that night by her aunt's side, she said, "Did you ever know any of the Macdonnells?"

"Oh, yes."

"Have you seen them lately?"

"Not since Mr. Macdonnel married."

"Oh, then you never saw his children?"

"Never."

"Did you know them very well?"

"Yes."

Now, they were at the bed-room door.

"These rooms used to have names, I think," said Lady Sarah, rather abruptly.

"Oh, my lady," said Edith, making a housekeeper's curtsey, "this is Sir Montague's apartment; Miss Mortimer sleeps in the Paradise chamber, and Sir Godfrey, in the Adam and Eve."

Her aunt smiled, and then came "Good night."



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE RICH WIDOW AND HER NEPHEW.

HENRY FORREST did a very kind, good-tempered action in writing to Angus Macdonnel. Angus did not deserve so much at his friend's hands, for writing a letter was so fatiguing to Henry Forrest's disabled fingers, that it was a thing as much as possible forbidden by his good and thoughtful aunt, as well as by the doctor. As to the doctor, Henry did not care much about him; but he did care for his aunt, and all the more because he knew that if he inflamed his hand by exertion, she would write every note and letter for him, unmurmuringly, for the next month to come. So, spreading out his paper, and taking up his pen in an awkward fashion, and apostrophizing her in his loneliness with a—"Now then, dear, good, kind, and most estimable of all relations, I hope this exertion will do neither of us any harm," he wrote the letter that has been already read: then, just as he was sealing it, a knock came to the door, and still going on quietly enough with the wax and the signet-ring, he called out—"The house is thine own—come in!"

The door opened, and there entered a lady, who seemed to have—as Captain Forrest declared she certainly had—an ambition to look much older than she really was. The gentleman got up, kissed her with small ceremony, which made her laugh—said, "You certainly were sent into this world to look pretty, Mrs. Bright;" and then giving her the pen and placing a chair, proceeded to deliver the direction, affecting, with great success, the grand tones of a conceited man instructing an ignorant child. She wrote in a firm, stiff, plain hand, as her nephew dictated; and then said, "Well, Henry—but writing is bad for you; couldn't I have written for you?"

"My honoured aunt, no. It containeth a secret."

"Secrets among men!" said the lady, with a smile.

"You are so fond of secrets, aunt," said Captain Forrest, dropping his assumed manner, and speaking and looking very earnestly.

Mrs. Bright, whose face was round and rosy, with beautiful bright grey eyes; the prettiest mouth and teeth possible, and still dark hair; and a countenance made for laughter, looked excessively grave,—not to say displeased, at this. "Let secrets be secrets," she said.

"For a year and a day," sighed Henry.

"Don't joke on serious subjects," she answered.

"I don't believe in its seriousness"—In spite of her making a gesture, and a very commanding one, to signify that she would have silence on this matter, her nephew proceeded; playfully holding her arm, he said, "I don't; indeed I don't. I believe you do it for the sake of the *propers*. It would not be *proper* to behave as you might behave; as you could—as you would, but for these *propers*."

"Indeed—indeed"—her voice trembled,— "indeed, I am sincere, Henry."

"Not always"—

"Oh, Henry!"

"Not always, I say—I persist—not always. Not when you dress like sixty, and try to walk like sixty. I'll give you a crutch, you could do the infirm splendidly with a little practice, and I know you would like it—like sixty I say, when you are twelve or fifteen years younger"

"Indeed, Henry, I am"—

"Now, don't! Never speak quick under temptation. You know you like to be thought an old woman, and *that* you make an immense parade of that one grey hair,—is it one or two?—that, in a very good light, can be seen in those—forgive me—uncommonly pretty bright braids of yours; you don't call that sincere—do you?"

"Indeed, Henry, you are too bad."

"Am I? what a pleasant variety," said Henry. "Sit down, my respected aunt, and I'll tell you what I have said to Angus."

And Captain Forrest made Mrs. Bright sit down, when he repeated to her faithfully enough, what was written within the letter she had directed.

"But Henry," said Mrs. Bright, trying to look solemn, which it was very hard to do if she was to look in her nephew's face at the same time; "I don't know that I should have sent an invitation to Mr. Macdonnel, if I had known that he was of *that* Macdonnel family, and that he had designs on Miss Mortimer."

Quick went Henry Forrest's face into the very gravity of horror—"That Macdonnel—and *designs*. It's no use denying the charges, Mrs. Bright. He is,—eh,—in fact, *himself*—he is, indeed; and he has something, not perhaps so dreadful as *designs*, but, views, fancies, fidgets—yes, fidgets is the best word concerning that dark-haired, severe-browed, stately-stepping; rather, I think—for *I* am sincere,—self-reliant small child yonder; who really becomes that house so well, that I shall earnestly recommend Angus not to try to remove her to another."

"My dear Henry," said Mrs. Bright, solemnly, "I like to see you in good spirits, but I don't like trifling. I admire Miss Mortimer very much"—

"So do I; go on, Mrs. Bright."

"Well, then," hesitated Mrs. Bright, for she had no more to say,—*"Well then, Henry, we ought to be civil to them."*

"My dining there to-day was one of the civillest things that ever was done. Do you know that Sir Godfrey had heard of my being so unfortunate as to leave that 'Horse-guard's card' on the Flashers, and of their absurd talk. It actually was a sort of introduction to me. The moment I told my name, he exclaimed, 'Oh yes, I remember!' and asked what regiment I was in when I got my hurt; and the next thing said,—was, 'Come and dine to-day.' Then, as we walked up the fields, he told me he had had a laugh at my expense, already."

"And then you laughed," said Mrs. Bright.

"*I?* oh no; not I! I put the thing aside quite grandly, and said, 'I know your cousin, Angus Macdonnel, I know him very well. He had just exchanged into my

old regiment when we came back from India. *He is a great friend of mine*; I said it so emphatically, — you should have heard that—it was *so sincere*, you know."

"I think it was sincere, and quite right," said his aunt, "But how did he take it?"

"Oh, he swallowed it bravely, like a good—" But now Henry Forrest swallowed,—*"I beg your pardon,"* he said.

"Like a gentleman," suggested Mrs. Bright, trying to look grave, but not with perfect success.

"Yes, yes," said Captain Forrest, with a mock gravity; "and it was *then* he asked me to dinner."

"Of course he knows Mr. Macdonnel."

"Never saw him in his life. Angus has told me the story from beginning to end. It was a very long story, and took no end of cigars. But, briefly, it was no more than this: somebody's grandfather and somebody else's great-grandfather were brothers or cousins, I forget which; one was English, one was Scotch. In Scotland there was money enough; in England there was more money, by thousands, than it is really decent for any modest man to possess. The English heir had a dark daughter, and the Scotch heir a fair son."

"Is it all true?" said Mrs. Bright; "you are so imaginative, Henry."

"Why, you know it is true. You have seen the young lady, and have asked the young gentleman to visit you."

"Well, Henry, go on," said Mrs. Bright, not with any appearance of perfect belief, or of an entire understanding.

"Then the English father flew into a passion, and left all he could leave to the Scotch cousin; and so Angus and his father came to Menadarva, and Sir Godfrey and the dark daughter came among us here."

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Bright.

"I don't know that *I* am sorry," said Henry.

"Well, but what more did Mr. Macdonnel say?—though really it is no affair of mine."

"It has become your affair, thou prudent and self-denying lady. Angus saw Miss Mortimer,—no, he saw a

dark fairy in the Park, or at the Opera, or anywhere else, and asked who she was. Was told it was Miss Mortimer; found out it was his cousin, and called on her father bravely. But Sir Godfrey was out. He called again, and Sir Godfrey was gone into the country. And then he took me into his confidence, and said that, in fact, the unjust will of the furious father had been repented of; that he had it on the best authority that the excellent old gentleman would have signed a new will if he had had the time and the power. And that, as Edith was extraordinarily beautiful, and as Menadarva was far too splendid a property to think of giving up, however unhappily got—

“Surely he did not say that?” exclaimed Mrs. Bright, in horror.

“Oh dear, no! he would not have said it for the world. I am only giving you the history of what was passing in Angus’s mind. As, to these two circumstances was added a third, that Sir Godfrey would arrange his affairs so as to leave Mortimer Manor and all the hitherto entailed possessions to Edith, that he had better do a poetical justice, and marry Edith, and unite the properties; and that he so purposed and intended. Now, you perceive, he had failed in getting acquainted with Sir Godfrey in town; and he had had no invitation into the country: so, on finding that you were living within a hundred yards of the Manor-house gate, what so natural as that he should expect an invitation?”

“I hope you will not send that letter, Henry.”

“I have not half done,” said Captain Forrest. “Listen to the end. To-day I told Sir Godfrey that I had contemplated asking Angus here. Immediately, he quite jumped at the idea. ‘I should be very glad to know him,’ he said; ‘very glad to know him through the medium of some mutual friend.’ There have been passages not quite of a loving nature, between the rival houses of Macdonnell and Mortimer, and I gave Sir Godfrey to understand that I knew as much. Therefore, my dear aunt, as Sir Godfrey does not like the inheritance of feud, but as he cannot very well make up to Angus himself, it would not look well,

and for the dark-haired daughter's sake has to be avoided, I determined to turn peace-maker, and humour Angus and write the invitation—that still lies there, waiting your pleasure, madam.”

“I suppose it may go,” said Mrs. Bright. “I hope he is a young man of high principles.”

“Principles?—He has none,” said Captain Forrest.

“Oh Henry, and *your* friend?”

“And *my* friend. He really is a very good kind of fellow. He has the instincts of a gentleman; never does a wrong thing; and has, perhaps, *one* principle—to please himself. I really do not think that Angus has any great faults. He is a most amiable fellow; but he pursues his own way; he must and will please himself; and he is a little hot-tempered. In fact, if he had not shown some determination about that interesting individual—*Himself*, he would have been rubbed down into nothing by this time, for his father and mother are, without any exception, the most disagreeable people on the face of the earth.”

“Now, Henry,” exclaimed Mrs. Bright, interrupting him, with a severe voice; “you know that I dislike that sort of exaggeration.”

“Your pardon, I beseech you,” cried Henry.

“You *know* I object to it.”

“I do, I do. I know you have not recovered Lady Mercer saying, with her exquisite drawl, ‘Oh, don’t buy a French clock. *We* had one, and it *never* went; and was *always* at the clockmaker’s; and it *really* wore us to death; and we *spent a fortune* in repairing it.’”

“Well,”—smothering a smile—“but it is an odious trick.”

“So it is,” said Captain Forrest, getting up, and taking a few steps up and down the room; “so it is. But, to speak within the bounds of rigid truth, it is said that Mr. Macdonnel was soured in his youth; and he looks it.”

Captain Forrest looked it. Mrs. Bright laughed heartily.

“Let us say ‘Good night,’” she said.

“Good night,” said Captain Forrest, and went on:—

“And Mrs. Macdonnel is not the least like you, not the

least bit imaginable. I firmly believe her gowns are lined with Puritan tracts. She crackles as she walks, like phosphorous matches before they go off. She says 'How are you?' with cruelty; and it's like claspings a dagger's blade to shake hands with her."

Mrs. Bright held up her hands imploringly; but Captain Forrest went on.

"No wonder if Angus is a little wilful and untamed. *This* kind of influence never blessed him," and he held his aunt's hand and looked at her lovingly. "*This* is what does one good. Something always soft and sweet, yet firm, and feeling strongly. Something downright good, and kind, and simple-minded; something one always wants to oblige, and never feels afraid of." She had tried to stop him, but couldn't.

"Good night, Mrs. Bright. I respect you greatly. Good night."

And night settled down on the well-ordered house, and not a sound disturbed its deep repose till early morning, when the servants were astir, and the Hunchback at "The Captain's" door for orders. Mrs. Bright's part towards getting the breakfast ready was quite a little ceremony, always. Henry came in, slipper-shod and dressing-gowned; for he never professed to be "decent" till the surgeon had dressed his hand and Hunchback had sown on the bandages. He now sat, silent, and looking at the performances carried on before him. His aunt watched a glittering kettle that was on the point of boiling on the brightest of fires. Cherry, the maid, whose real name was Charity, placed a covered dish, whence issued a most appetizing smell, on a polished trivet within the fender. Coffee and teapot of old and beautifully decorated silver. The hot-roll plate, the covered dish at the bottom of the table, the slop-basin, and all other parts of the equipage that could be of metal, were silver of exquisite form and workmanship, and all marked with the arms of Forrest. The table was dark oak, with leaves, and only too many carved legs. The damask was extraordinarily fine. A small, heavy Turkey carpet only covered the middle of the polished-oak floor, and a large rug to match made the



fireside comfortable. There were neither couches nor sofas in the room, and the chairs were very large and very weighty. Over the fire, inserted in the panelling, was a very well-done picture of the interior of the house of Lazarus; there was great majesty and tenderness in the figure of Him who blessed those walls, and Mary, and Martha, kneeling. Hung round the room were large Roman prints of those well-known monuments of antiquity—the Colosseum, the Arch of Titus, and others; for one of the family had once made “the grand tour,” and these were the things he had brought back with him.

It was a great pleasure to Mrs. Bright to know that no great alteration had occurred in that house for above a hundred and fifty years; a little comparatively new furniture had been brought in, but that was all. It was not an ancient and historical place like the Manor House; but it was excessively respectable, and it was not destined to lose anything in Mrs. Bright’s hands, depend upon it. Sometimes, if a too officious and rather ignorant visitor suggested a change, Mrs. Bright would say: “Henry can do what he likes by-and-by.” But there was always a sound with that “*by-and-by*” which made it understood that in her time things should stay as they were. And Henry was an unlikely person to make any change in that gable-ended, palladian-windowed house; he loved it too well.

Mrs. Flasher said to Captain Forrest that day, “Such a pity so nice a house should have no name. ‘Mrs. Bright’s’ sounds like nothing. A name, now—a well-chosen name, just painted on the entrance gate-post in those clever letters which look like carving—that would be so nice, and so suitable. Really, the house deserves a name.”

“Forrest Lodge, now?” says Henry.

“Oh, you are sure of the property, are you?” says Mrs. Flasher, slyly.

“If my aunt should not marry again,” Henry replies, with a perfect gravity. This idea seems a very droll and unexpected one, and produces a round of “Oh, dear!” “Who would ever?” “Just fancy!” “How funny!” “Mrs. Bright, indeed; good gracious.” To which Henry

replies, with an almost painful sincerity, that he thinks his aunt the most attractive person in Steeple-hill. And all unite in saying yes to that; and Capt. Forrest, to reward them, returns to the name, and says he thinks Forrest Lodge would speak too strongly of his expectations.

"Well, it would speak of the past as well as the future," says Mrs. Flasher. "I remember your uncle and aunt when they were Mr. and Mrs. Forrest, before he took the name of Bright. When that money was left with the condition of taking the name, then it was done. And everybody expected that he would take his own name back again, and, if he had no children, entail the house and land on you. But he died suddenly—you can't recollect much about it—and a short will left everything in her hands. Still, I don't fancy 'Forrest Lodge,' though, of course, a name it ought to have—but something more ancient—now, *The Priory*; that would do beautifully; its hardly big enough for *The Abbey*."

"Oh, yes. 'The Priory,' the five daughters echo the mother. But Henry Forrest says, boldly, that he is un-English in one particular, and hopes they will not be horror-struck. He is not at all in love with sacrilege, as he knows it is the fashion to be; he is not at all fond of churches in ruins, or religious houses turned into private gentlemen's rather luxurious dwellings. He knows that Mr. Stangrove is considered as one of the most refined men in the world, and of the most exquisite taste, and he is sure that he is an accomplished scholar; but to build a wall on Worrel's-height, and put a church window in it, to look pretty from the library at Stangrove-park, was an idiotic work. The independence of these thoughts, the courage that gives them words, is quite as wonderful to the minds of the Flasher family as the bravery that scaled the heights of Moogoola, and made Henry Forrest, at his years, the hero that he certainly was. The ladies think him very strange; and when he goes, keep to the declaration, which no one disputes, of his being decidedly handsome."

Now he hastens on the broad centre way through the village, and stops to say, "How do you?" to a tall youth:

standing there. "When will the fishing days come again? Wasn't last autumn pleasant? But I half-despair of my hand. I wonder if I shall ever get well. To have three stiff and crooked fingers is a horrible penalty to pay for not minding pain, and good advice, and using my poor hand too soon. I shall be wiser if ever I am able to take the chance of having such a wound again. I'm going to drive to Worrel; will you come with me? How do you do, Mrs. Trotman?"

"Yes, captain," says Mrs. Trotman, who now joins her son. "Yes; do go to Worrel. And see my father about your hand. Of course, I am prejudiced. But a man does not do surgery among the coal-pits, till he is seventy for nothing. He is staying there with my sister Clarkson."

"Let's go," said Henry. "But I shall go to London about my fingers, I think. Can I take anything to Worrel for you?"

"A basket of store-apples, for my father—do you mind, Captain Forrest?"

"What should I mind?"

"The basket will look so queer in the gig," said the youth.

"Spoken very unlike a man," replied Henry. "What's the use of being known, if one can't do as one likes?"

"But everybody is not known," said the young man, with a droll smile.

"More shame to them," said Henry, "if they have lived long enough. Every man in his actions writes his history—and every history has its own world of hearers. Man dies like grass, but does not live like it. Come along. We'll call for the apples in ten minutes."

"Oh, give me a quarter of an hour. I have got to pick them out and wipe them."

"Send down, then, when you are ready."

"Thank you. The nicest young man in the county," said Mrs. Trotman; but then she shook her head. Mrs. Trotman was making a mental reservation.

While Henry Forrest is seeing his horse harnessed, his aunt is soliloquizing at the window; and these are her half-expressed thoughts: "I hope I am not doing wrong

about dear Henry. One can only do as one *thinks* best. But one wants a rule, or a something to go by. It is so hard to make a fixed rule out of thoughts, that are just as likely to be wrong as right. He is *so* good. Well; months have passed already. It may as well work itself out. And I don't know that I repent. And I don't know, but that if I changed, I might repent *that*. Oh, well!—but I feel so queer, these Worrel days always. Nobody will ever know the trial of this winter, and these Worrel days.”

Here Henry Forrest came in, and read something in her blank face easily enough.

“Why are you looking in that style?—Now, I know what you are thinking about. It has nothing to do with *that*. I am going to Worrel just for my own foolish pleasure—for air, for exercise: to give the horse his work: to give young Trotman a variety—to carry apples for his mother. Don't ever look in that way—it hurts me. It's all right. And it's not going to last for ever—good bye.”

“My dear Henry—I hope you don't think very ill of me!”

“I hope not. I should have a moderately miserable opinion of the rest of the world if I did.”

Mrs. Bright smiles again.

“Any messages?”

No. There were no messages. And his aunt watched him going, and said, “How proud they would have been of him”—meaning his parents. Then gave him the bright smile that she knew he would look up for. Smiled again when he touched his hat gaily, and turning away, wiped her eyes as she sat down to work.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE NEIGHBOURS.

MRS. BRIGHT, Mrs. Trotman, and Mrs. Flasher, all called again—on Lady Sarah this time. Sir Marmaduke Mercer, a cotton-spinner, whose chief domestic history lay in his having been knighted, and having married a gentlewoman, had with his wife and only child Eleanor, called also. They lived at a place about three miles off, exactly like a town-hall, stuck upon a hill. He had built it. Behind him was a huge factory with its walls full of windows—he had built that too. He and the factory had been there twenty years, yet he was a good deal of a stranger, and a little of an intruder. The poor who worked at the factory, were not quite so much thought of as those who worked on the land. The two interests had met in the village. It was not yet decided whether Steeple-hill was to be a manufacturing place or not. Extreme views were taken. Either Sir Marmaduke was a speculator, and would be the ruin of Steeple-hill, or he was a prudent man, whose life had been one great success, and he would be the making of it. It was not a thickly populated neighbourhood. The ten miles round Steeple-hill had scarcely a house of any distinction upon it. There was the small town of Worrel, five miles off, where the nearest Catholic chapel was, and beyond that was an old property with a modern house upon it, called Stangrove-park. Mr. Stangrove had written a note to Sir Godfrey, saying that business in London had prevented his calling. There was something in the note that amused him. It was difficult to tell what it was. Edith said that the writer was always in a hurry. She did not mean a bustle—he was very smooth, but he never

stopped; and her father made merry over her powers of interpretation.

But Sir Godfrey also had engagements in London, and he was away for three weeks. His daily note was the day's precious thing to Edith. They were short. One was only—"A happy father wishes his dear child 'good night.'" But Edith's cheek grew warm and her eyes sparkled as she read it. At last it was—"I have finished my business very satisfactorily. I have sold the carriage and the horses too. I have dismissed James, who wiped his eyes, but he is in a good place. I have bought a pony-carriage, and you shall drive me when I do not ride. Norman must look out for a pony. And, you will like best to hear that I am coming home to-morrow."

When Sir Godfrey arrived, he said to Edith, "I have seen Mr. Stangrove, and I am afraid you are a witch."

"Oh, delightful!—and did I tell his character rightly?"

"My dear, you told a very little, but that little wonderfully well. I was in the same carriage with him; he is a fine countenanced man, and middle-aged, and talks with a volubility and a hardihood that nothing can describe. He knows everything and agrees with everybody. He was charmed with a Quaker and delighted by a Puseyite, and agreed with them both."

"Did you know who he was?" asked Edith:

"No, not while we were on the journey. He has one fixed view,—that to be a party-man is to cease to be a gentleman. Opinions, he says, are just like tastes. One likes beef, another likes mutton; both are animal food, either supports life—why quarrel over them? He said, that what truth is, is an open question in this country; not to confess *that*, was to be ignorant or dishonest. He did not at all wish to say that it ought not to be so; but he pressed the fact, because the self-respect of English gentlemen must be risked if they do not meet it honestly. 'My dear sir,' he said to me vehemently, 'I am jealous for the honour of my class. If it should ever be necessary to say that, as to truth,—we know nothing about it; why, for goodness sake let us say so,—let us say so and be gentlemen.'"

"What a very odd man," said Lady Sarah.

"What a dreadful place Stangrove-park must be," said Edith.

"When he got out," said Sir Godfrey, "there were servants waiting for him and I heard his name; so I immediately introduced myself, and we are great friends, already."

"And here," said Edith, looking down, "is an invitation to dinner from Mr. and Mrs. Flasher to meet Mr. Stangrove and Sir Marmaduke and Lady Mercer."

"Oh, we go, of course?" said Sir Godfrey, inquiringly.

Lady Sarah said, "Yes."

Edith had a difficulty which must for truth's sake be recorded: she did not know how to go. The six or eight hundred yards from their own gates to Mrs. Flasher's door was an impassable way, and she thought that it showed an immense elasticity, and a superior knowledge of the world, and a general heroism in her father, when she heard him say, "Norman, just manage that *that* fly shall come here for me, when it has taken Mrs. Bright and Mrs. Trotman, on Tuesday."

"I never thought of that," said Edith, with a vague look in the eyes, which were gazing out into infinite space.

"People do so," said her father, "always do so here."

"Oh"—and the vague eyes, in infinite space, saw the word "*people*." And the heart asked, very ungrammatically, "Am I *people*?"

Now Edith had dined out twice before in her life, once in London, once from Menadarva, and a great deal of consideration had been given to what she should wear, and how she would look. But Lady Sarah was not a person who took trouble; everything was a matter of course. Of course Edith was to dress, and look like herself. Martha said that she looked like a picture, and just as if she had stepped out of a gold frame! As a matter of fact, she stepped into the fly with the unanswered question at her heart of whether or not she was "*people*" as busy as ever.

Mrs. Flasher having got through the toils of taking the petticoats off the ottomans, and the pinafores off the chairs; and having unflounced the curtains, unbaggged the bell-pulls, unmuffled the pictures, and unveiled the looking-

glass; and having got through the anxieties of mocking the turtle and clearing the jelly, received her guests in her best *moire antique*, and was very happy, with her husband and five daughters by her side. Everything was as might have been expected. No one knew how to go to dinner; good-natured people saw jokes in mistakes; and it took a little bustling to get Sir Godfrey away from his sister and daughter, and to contrive that, of all the five Miss Flashers, not two should sit together. Things were accomplished at last, and Edith was placed between Mr. Stangrove, who talked, and a young man, or full-grown boy, who never spoke, but who Edith felt magnetically was looking at her, and conveying the food to his lips perilously and by hazard in consequence. Below Mr. Stangrove sat Eleanor Mercer, like a lovely statue. She was wonderfully beautiful. All through dinner she scarcely spoke. Then came that trial of agreeability, the drawing-room. Edith underwent a torturing examination as to what she could do. She did not say she could think and dream, but she felt honestly that those were her chief accomplishments. Mrs. Trotman in her secret heart thought her rather a dunce. The young ladies sung trios and played duets, and kept good time and never missed a single note. And Edith was asked to sing and couldn't. She couldn't because she was *there*. Her aunt looked at her and she turned pale. That most comprehending aunt asked Miss Mercer to sing, and Eleanor complied immediately.

Edith listened, and was fascinated. For a time she seemed to lose all recollection of there being any one else in the room. But eager words distracted her—Lady Mercer saying that “Sir Marmaduke had thought it right. That of course it was right. She was sorry that those poor Dawsons were ill, and would relieve them if Mrs. Trotman would not betray who had sent the money. They never came to church;”—and then the gentlemen came in, and all the voices ceased but Eleanor's,—and that ceased the next minute, and then there was a clattering of tea-things. Edith got near Eleanor and uttered the only voluntary words she had spoken in the house.

“I liked that so much,” said Edith.



"It's Victoria sponge-cake," said Eleanor.

"I meant your singing," said Edith, her voice faltering, her heart fluttering with repentance for having spoken; and her face blushing at the idea of her being supposed to say that she liked cake, and liked it *so much*. "Oh," said Eleanor, with a languid smile,—“How funny! yes it's a pretty song; Madame Dolne taught it to me.”

"Taught you music," said Edith.

"No! Taught me that song; I can scarcely ever teach myself a song. There's always a sort of trick in them. Papa is very fond of music, and he takes me to London, and chooses what I shall learn—and who shall teach me.”

Edith thought that Eleanor Mercer was dreadful. But Eleanor liked Edith, and kept her by her side, saying little nothings, to which Edith did not listen. She heard Hester Flasher talking to Captain Forrest, and her sister echoing her.

"How lovely the Manor-house is now!" "Oh isn't it?"

"I thought that spring would be its most beautiful season," said Captain Forrest.

"Oh yes." "Oh spring of course." "But inside, you know." "The rooms and the pictures."

"A little like a broker's rooms, or what do you call them?—curiosity-shops," said Captain Forrest.

"So nice to have such an old family in the village," said Hester. "Oh, I don't know how old!" echoed the other.

"The flood," suggests Captain Forrest.

And then, Edith can't bear remaining by Eleanor Mercer any longer, and, looking very beautiful, she walks across the room to where her father stands talking,—no, *listening* to Mr. Stangrove.

"You and I, Miss Mortimer, have many feelings in common," says Mr. Stangrove.

Edith knew that her father was laughing. But she had a way of always doing her best in that most beloved presence; and so, for his sake, she smiled on Mr. Stangrove, and prepared to become that most popular thing in the world, an excellent listener.

"You are fond of old things,—things eloquent of the past," says Mr. Stangrove; "so am I." Then he spoke

of Stangrove Park, old pictures, pedigrees, armour, furniture of five hundred years old,—oak couches with carved crucifixes over head, old lace and altar furniture: and yet he contrives, between speeches to Edith, to say to Sir Godfrey and others about him that he is a true-hearted Protestant, but that, admitting his theory, he admires Catholicism beyond everything else in the world, and that he believes that science and revelation are all one,—and then to Edith, “You must come and see my treasures: they are family relics; you will enjoy them very much.”

For a moment Edith hates them all; and when again she hears that ready voice robbing life of its poetry, and showing the real nothingness of all around him, she wishes for a fire to devour those treasures, and feels as if she could hold the match herself.

“And these are *people*,” said Edith to herself,—“and I really need not have anything to do with them, and I won’t.”

The evening was over at last; and when once again within the almost sacred shelter of that dear home, she thought of being alone, alone in her own room, as a luxury; and she felt in a hurry, and was the first to say “Good night.”

But Lady Sarah said, “Will you come to my room?” and Edith could not say, “No.” So they stood by the fire; and Sir Montague in his picture looked down on them, with “Ave Maria” on the clasp of his Morion, as if he was listening to their words.

Aunt Sarah smiled on her niece. She smiled the smile of experience.

“Don’t you wish to see the treasures of Stangrove?”

“No; I hate it all. He is dreadful. Think of his talking, talking, talking, like a whirlwind scattering everything to atoms, and never hearing the voices of those still witnesses. Oh, I am sorry for them! Why are they there? Why will not an earthquake come and bury them? To think of that man having had ancestors! Oh, aunt, don’t laugh at me, I have been out of my world long enough; I want to rush away and forget.”

Lady Sarah kissed her.

"But, aunt, just tell me one thing. Are you ever going to tell me that I am too fond of old things,—too fond of that past, which is history—*our* history?"

Edith's fixed eyes were on her aunt's calm face. There was a moment's pause; then the answer,—

"No, Edith."

"But why not?"

"Because it is of no use. Shall I say so?"

"But why, aunt? Tell the real truth."

"Because you are a Catholic."

"Oh, charming! That will do!" cries Edith, and runs away and shuts herself in, and makes a business of forgetting, till she has rocked her tired mind to repose, and sleeps,—sleeps as if life had no pain, and earth no sorrow, and souls no sin. And while she sleeps, Lady Sarah prays—prays that she may *never* wake,—never wake to such anguish and bitterness as the many know, and yet, in the days of peace, gain strength for the storm that *may* come, and that but few escape: and Lady Sarah thinks that she will guide her to strength if she can, and she may; for she fears for the world that is before Edith.

The morning came. A fresh morning, with the birds singing, and the sun showing little glittering specks on shrubs and trees, where green leaves and bright flowers will push forth by-and-by.

When Edith entered the breakfast-room, only her aunt was there.

"Where is papa?"

"Gone with Mr. Stangrove and Captain Forrest to the 'meet' of the Duke's hounds."

"How busy the world is," said Edith, pouring very slowly some coffee on some cream, and lazily lifting up her eyelids to look at Lady Sarah.

Lady Sarah broke an egg with a sharp sound, and said briskly, "Let us have a walk after breakfast."

"Where, dear aunt?"

"I was going to see those Dawsons,—those poor people spoken of by Lady Mercer. I will come back for you, or I can send Martha."

"I think you had better take *me*," said Edith.

"Best of all, my dear child. Yes, let us go."

"I don't know much about poor people," said Edith.

"Their lives are busy scenes," her aunt says.

But Edith answers that she does not think it busy to be in a constant routine. Habit cures excitement. It is excitement that kills.

Lady Sarah asks if poverty is not exciting.

"No. Poverty is comparative," Edith says. "The man who earns twelve shillings a week is rich by the side of the man who earns eight. It is quite possible for a man earning twenty shillings a week to be as rich as Sir Godfrey with eight hundred a year,—richer," Edith says, with great philosophy. "Mere money differences she never could be interested in. Hearts and minds make friends; purses don't feel; but money buys education, and education fits people to be noticed, and then it's of use."

"Eleanor Mercer, for example," says Lady Sarah, to whom her niece has imparted the incident of the sponge-cake.

"No," Edith says. Her theory has broken down through some unseen imperfection. "Some people are not capable of being educated; they may be taught like parrots, but that is not education. After all, *people*—Edith smiles to herself—people must have some innate something,—I come to diamonds cut and uncut," said Edith.

"And there are diamonds in all classes," said Lady Sarah.

"But who is to cut them?"

"You are."

Edith holds up her little hands in graceful horror, and hides her face.

They leave the breakfast-room, and put on bonnets and shawls. Lady Sarah is ready first. She is looking out of the window when Edith enters, and turns round to meet her. Her face is thoughtful, and very sweet; her step graceful, dignified, and gentle. There rises that warm light into her eyes, that glow of life into her cheek. Edith's face sparkles with admiration. She steps towards her quickly.

"I wish all the world were like you, Aunt Sarah. Rough things grow smooth,—rugged things have a charm upon them,—dark places grow light,—ugliness itself is softened under your smile. You are like moonlight—very like moonlight on a summer's night, when it is warm, because of the heat that the day has left, Aunt Sarah."

But Aunt Sarah's face glowed for one moment as if the mid-day sun had touched it, and she almost quivered under the young girl's fanciful words.

"What is the matter?" says Edith, looking eagerly at her.

"Nothing, dear child, nothing,—only a thought."

"Tell it?"

She puts her arm within Edith's, and walks away; but she speaks,—

"Only, Edith, that such a light is the light of the Church. It is the reflected light; it shows by God's grace upon her children, and shows best and sweetest on those who have suffered the heat of the day."

"Poetry realized," said Edith, musingly.

"Yes," said Lady Sarah, slightly increasing her pace, and stepping with a firm, free tread; "poetry is the reality of those within the Church, and the talk of those without her. But you have not settled what education is yet? This is the cottage. I dare say that man is young Frank Dawson."

"Where is the father?" asks Edith.

"Transported," says Lady Sarah.

Just one movement of drawing back from Edith, and then a return of courage, and she listens while Lady Sarah speaks to Frank.

He says they may go in if they like. He goes before them. They put aside a heavy stiff curtain that divides the living from the sleeping room, and Edith beholds a picture.

Opposite was the bed, where the children, huddled together and clinging to each other, half lay, half sat, one mingling heap of tattered garments and emaciated flesh. They were straining their eye-balls on their mother, who lay on a lower bed, and who now grasped her son's hand.

with the strength of the dying. He, tearful and alarmed, cast soft glances at her. She saw in them the gleams of tender youth and loving childhood. She felt a sort of happiness. She tried to smile ; but what a ghastly look !

Then Lady Sarah spoke to her. The woman made one strong effort as if she would have raised herself and spoken. But what a shiver, and what a cry. She fixed her eyes on Lady Sarah, and she *did* speak. With an effort which strained every feature she cried, "I would—I would—oh—send"—and then she dropped back, and Lady Sarah, on her knees, received her head upon her arm, and whispered holy words.

She sighed, and was still ; and sighed again, and was still again. And Edith stood as motionless as a statue, and watched the woman's face. And then there came a faint struggle, and a look, and—"Oh, God ! can this be death ?" cried Edith, and dropped upon her knees ; and a sob of unutterable anguish from Frank Dawson answered "Yes !" But Lady Sarah did not speak ; she was unclasping the fingers of the dead from the crucifix which she wore about her neck, and which the woman had clasped in dying with an eloquent power.

The first sound of words that broke upon the awe of the moment was the voice of the biggest girl in the bed close by. She raised herself above her sisters, and, shrouding herself as well as she was able with the scanty clothing, she spoke terribly. "He has done it !" she cried, "with her long thin arm extended towards Frank ; "she has never smiled since he went the second time to gaol. She has cried through every day, and helped us through this sickness with a heart resting on *his* disgrace. Fool, who couldn't keep his character, — coward, who couldn't starve !"

But Frank seemed not to hear her. He was flung across the bed where the dead mother lay, and was weeping bitterly.

Softly and imploringly Edith whispered in that solemn place, "Oh ! hush, hush ; it is not so ; you do not know ; you are but a child !"

And loud and firm came the girl's voice in answer. "A

child—a child ! what is that ? I can see, feel, think, and hear. I shall earn my own bread when I am well again. I am sixteen years of age ; I have known all—learnt all—felt all,—no, *children* are not as wise as that.” And Edith, in all her strength, shrunk away from the being before her.

The other children had dropped down among the rags that covered them, and were crying out their sorrow ; but that young girl of terrible experience was still in her raised position ; and her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes glaring brightly, and her lips were quivering and pale as the corpse on which she gazed. Silence was worse than words. There was such scorn and vindictiveness in the girl’s silence.

Edith felt obliged to speak :

“ Come to Sir Godfrey,”—her heart turned always to her father ; “ come to Sir Godfrey : his kindness, his charity—”

“ Charity !” the girl almost screamed ; “ charity ! was I born to beg ? What should make you think that I was born to beg ? Were *you* ?”

And now Edith saw that she was beautiful. As, shrinkingly, she gazed upon the girl, deformed as she appeared in the pride of her passion, she saw that she was beautiful ; that the long neck was set upon the shoulders with a perfect grace ; that the full throat was rounded to a polished loveliness ; that the form of the forehead spoke of powers of mind ; that there was imagination in the brilliant eye ; and in the proud parting of those pale lips, what a heart’s history was there !

There was a little bustle, and the curtain drawn : it was Mrs. Flasher. She held a basket.

“ Dear now, too late, I see. Bless me, Lady Sarah !—well, there’s no harm in it ; but this is no place for Miss Mortimer.”

Lady Sarah had just risen from the bed-side. Mrs. Flasher held money, gold, in her hand ; it was what Lady Mercer had offered to Mrs. Trotman the night before.

“ Now, Frank,” she said, “ this is no place for a man just now. Bless me, but I feel for you.” She wiped the

tears from her face, and said, "Hold your tongue," to Kate, who would have spoken, but who now dropped down and cried. "Here, Frank, take this half-crown to Betsey Broughton; tell her to come,—she is the best person. And here, a friend sent you a sovereign. Don't go to the parish for the coffin. Now make haste. I'll stay till Betsey comes. And bring two loaves of bread; I have some little things from our party of yesterday, which will do for to-day."

And Frank was gone; then Mrs. Flasher sat down and cried for two minutes, and then said to Kate, "Have you anything in the house,—meat, candles, soap,—eh?"

"Nothing," sobbed Kate, "nothing, nothing. Oh! don't speak to me." Which made Mrs. Flasher rise up and smooth their bedclothes, and tell them to lie still and shut their eyes.

And Edith stood by her aunt's side, and looked up in her aunt's face, for Mrs. Flasher had just said, "And, poor creature, it was so foolish of the Trotmans to try to make them come to church. The woman was born a Catholic, and I've heard her say that if she couldn't live like one, she would never live like anything else."

"Heavenly Father! that there should be such a death as this, and Thy servant at Mortimer Manor!"

And Edith's heart grew full as her aunt said those words; and she knew how much better than anything else on earth it was to be the servant of God. And she felt its power: its power over life and death. And she walked to the children's bedside, and laid her hand on Kate's shoulder, and made the girl look up and see a tender loving face; and she said,—

"I feel for you so much. And, Kate, I—I, too, have lost my mother: I know what you feel." And her tears fell on the girl's hand.

And Kate kissed the tears, as if her heart drank in their sympathy; and she said, "And I was angry, angry with poor Frank. Oh, poor Frank, there is not any one to be pitied as much as he."

But Frank was come back; and he stooped over the children, and kissed Kate. "You and I have strong



hearts and strong arms ; maybe there'll be work for both, and we'll take care of the little ones."

Then Betsey Broughton came in ; and the three ladies left the house. When they separated at the entrance to the Manor, Lady Sarah said to Edith, "You don't call that girl uneducated ? Edith, life is education—the operation of life on the mind."

"I am thinking of cutting diamonds," said Edith, in a very sad voice.

"The tears on that girl's hand—the tears she dried with her lips, began that work to-day," replied Lady Sarah.

And Edith sighed, and walked on.

"Thank God we cannot live to ourselves," Lady Sarah went on ; "we, of the Church, must work—are always working. His eye is on us ; His recording angel noting down our doings. The light is on a hill, and cannot be hid."

"It makes one almost afraid," said Edith.

"Afraid ?—no, *glad* ! Glad, because of our power—our power to work for and with God. How glorious ! it is enough of itself to make earth happy. How glorious to be associated with our Lord ! See, see," she went on, with that firm, soft voice, and putting her arm within Edith's, and resting on her as she walked, "see your own power—the power of a few tears that could not be restrained ; the power of one thought of sympathy, which brought your heart to that girl's, and made you equal, because both were motherless ; a few words——"

"I did not speak with any particular meaning ; I scarcely thought ; I felt—I was not——"

"I know. That is what I mean. We can't help working : for good as for ill we are always powerful. The soul that loves Him acts like Him. What sorrow might not hard hearts have worked just now. You have begun a work to-day."

All the neighbours gossipped ; not about Mrs. Dawson,—what was *she* to them ? A woman in that village had passed from earth in her anguish,—what was *that* to them ? A few sentences,—“Peggy Dawson is dead ;” “That poor soul, Frank Dawson's mother, is dead ;” “I had no idea that woman was so ill,—do you know she is dead ?”

"Lady Mercer has been so kind to those Dawsons;"—and so the sympathy expired, and minds passed on to admiration of Lady Mercer.

All the neighbours gossipped, but they gossipped of Mrs. Flasher's party. They had seen Sir Godfrey and Miss Mortimer; and they were full of admiration of Lady Sarah. Mr. Stangrove was all admiration of everybody. Mrs. Bright was quite charmed; Mrs. Trotman was agreeably surprised; and her husband declared himself relieved from a good deal of anxiety.

The opinions of Edith were various as to appearance; one, as to manner.

Cavendish Trotman had fallen in love. He walked out on pretence of seeing the "meet," but he had wandered away, and, five miles off, he had cut "E. M." on the bark of a tree. And then he had stretched himself beneath its limbs, and bemoaned himself aloud. The Spirit of common sense stood by him and reminded him that he would catch cold, and that there was nothing poetical in his head being tied up in a flannel cap, as his mother would unquestionably tie it, and in his being obliged to swallow a quart of posset. He only answered that he might as well love some bright, particular star, and seek to wed it,—she was so much above him.

Again common sense spoke:—As that was true, why not rise to something of an equality. He was going into the army. His father had taken infinite trouble with his education. Had he not better get up a tree and make a bird's-eye view of the country; or go home and practise himself in fortifications; or deliver those outpourings in French, to obtain a greater freedom of speech in that language.

Whether in obedience to these suggestions, or not, we do not feel quite sure, but Cavendish Trotman got up from the ground, and walked home to dinner, and worked at mathematics all the evening. And at Mortimor Manor they prayed for the dead.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THOSE WHO WORK.

THEY buried their dead out of their sight ; and young Kate Dawson sobbed beside the grave, and hugged one hand to her aching heart, and sometimes gave it a quick, hard, agonized kiss, and said the words " I, too, have lost a mother,"—for Edith's tears had fallen like a blessing on her torn soul, and soothed her angry spirit, and made her a woman once more.

And Frank saw the action, slight and concealed though it was ; and he knew the cause, and blessed the " young lady " in his heart, and asked of God to be merciful to her in the day of trial and grief. But Edith did not know it. She walked her own world, in her own sort of pride, which was very beautiful ; and she did not know, though Aunt Sarah knew, that in that moment when her heart had laid itself side by side with Kate's, she had worked the greatest work of her life ; that that moment of love had been miraculous.

But Edith desired Martha to send soup and bread, and tea and sugar, to the Dawsons ; and Lady Sarah sent Kate and her sister black frocks and bonnets ; and Frank went to the parish officers, and got work upon the roads. And his friends—if friends they were—laughed at him for taking such employment, and supposed that he was learning convict-work in preparation for joining his father. Kate went to Sir Marmaduke's Mill, and " humbled herself " for having left them so haughtily ; and the domestic affairs of the Dawson family were left to Matilda, a girl of fourteen years of age, who cooked, cleaned, washed, and sewed, and enlivened her smaller sisters by cutting turnips into dolls' heads, and drawing eyes and mouth

with a burnt stick, which they played with first, and devoured afterwards.

As the young man sat on a bundle of straw and hammered at the stones—as the young girl worked at the mill and heard the questions of where was her brother?—how many times had he been in gaol?—had they heard from their father lately?—and felt it all cruelly, and cutting deep down into her heart, a vision rose and strengthened them,—a vision of a young girl of tranquil, but commanding beauty, quite unlike anybody Steeple-hill had ever shown to them before, from whose heart their hearts had had comfort, and they would not disgrace her. Her precious gift of sympathy should bear fruit. And they worked hard and suffered silently and grew meek and conquered—and so Heaven works. But Edith did not know.

She did not forget the Dawsons. Still the soup and milk went there; and shoes were given to the children. Still she was sorry when she thought that hour of death over, and still she said it had determined her never to lose sight of those girls the Dawsons. But some cloud intercepted the view of their simple future, down which, to its farthest length, she might so easily have seen. Since that moment of true sympathy Edith had thought only of their *bodies*,—of clothing, and feeding, and consoling *them*. Did no *soul* ever cry out in its weakness, even within the fold of the Church—such has been its wanderings, and such its terrors and fears, that it can scarcely walk alone; that it wants help? Help me to clothe myself with good works. Encourage me to drink the bitter waters willingly. Smile on me that, for a moment, I may forget the severity of trial, in the blessing that thou art sent to us. All this seemed to Edith an impossible work, that is—impossible to her. Some one in their own rank of life—or perhaps above it—Martha, or that well-meaning Mrs. Flasher, if she had been a Catholic—what a pity that she was not! She had a natural turn for the useful. So the Dawsons gave Edith credit for more than she deserved. It is true, however, that she talked of them. She said to Father Maynard, who was one of the priests who lived

at Worrel, and came on Saturdays, and on the eve of all festivals to Mortimer Manor, and gave Benediction in the evening, and said mass the next day—it is true that she said to him, and very sincerely, that she was distressed not to have heard of Mrs. Dawson before. “Had he known her?”

Yes. He had often tried to bring her right again. But she was very hard to move. She never denied or disputed anything; but talked of her troubles and her poverty—seemed a person naturally inclined to take miserable views of things. Father Maynard was very thankful to hear of what Lady Sarah had said to her, and how in that last hour the poor woman seemed to repent.

“How very horrible for a woman to be so hard!”

“Very,” Father Maynard said, drily.

Then Edith wished that something could be done for Kate. “Such violent feelings!” shuddering; as if she were, in heart and experience, the grown-up woman, and Kate the spoilt child.

Then Father Maynard mentioned Matilda. “She is a very promising girl. That poor strange woman her mother, never objected to her learning catechism at home; but I could never get leave for her to join the other few children here, on Sundays, either for mass or instruction. Yet, even under those disadvantages, she learnt well.”

“She will come, now?” says Edith, with interest.

“Oh, they will all come, now!”

“Will Kate come? Poor Kate—it may soften her.” But Edith speaks condescendingly.

“I assure you,” Father Maynard says quickly—“If Kate feels strongly, she has suffered much.”

“Of course—such a mother! and the perpetual disgrace of such a father and brother.”

“Oh, I assure you, she never felt that kind of trial. She thinks them martyrs—and martyrdom is no disgrace, you know.”

“And quite impossible to convince such a girl as that, of its not being so.”

“Most likely; but I never tried. I am not sure that I don’t sympathize with her.”

"Oh, Father Maynard! Frank has been in gaol. No one about here will employ him."

"He was in gaol first wrongfully; on suspicion only; and most unjustly suspected. He was let out—"With no damage to your character,"—said the magistrates. But he lost a steady place at Farmer Reeves's. Poverty pinches. He gets a day's work here, a day's work there. He sells all he can sell. His starved mother falls ill. Barber, the doctor, says she is to have light nourishing food—a chicken, for instance. Who is to give it them? They beg of Norman in this house—and Norman is generous, according to his means. Gives mutton, and scraps, bread and soup. But the woman's mind runs on chicken—"If she could only pick the wing of any little bird. That sentence, Sir, did it"—those, Miss Mortimer, were Frank's words to me."

"Why did he not ask for chicken?"

"He did. The Trotmans in return, asked him why he never came to church?—why his mother never went anywhere?—why his sister looked so grand in a new straw bonnet? It is wonderful what cutting things very good kind of people say and *do*, when they pretend to bind up the bruised hearts of the poor."

Edith was getting interested. "Perhaps I should have done the same."

"No," said Father Maynard,—"I think not. You are, naturally, and by education too refined. It is like having an ear for music—the power of comprehending a fine painting, or the appreciation of the presence of true poetry. Naturally-refined persons *seldom* hurt the hearts that approach them; but a good Christian—a good Catholic, Miss Mortimer, *never* wounds, not even when reproving."

"They only do nothing, sometimes," said Edith, "Not having a call to such activities. But I think I should have been civil and given Frank a chicken. But what happened?"

"He begged elsewhere. At Mr. Flasher's. She said, —'When we feast, you feast. We do all we can. If you will go to the board, Mr. Flasher will speak for you.'"

"That was very good, but not chicken," said Edith.

"What then?"

"He went to Mrs. Bright's——"

"Oh, Mrs. Bright!" cried Edith. "Of course she gave the chicken and had it roasted, and added bread-sauce, and Cherry took it quite secretly, covered with a damask cloth. Do you know, I admire Mrs. Bright a good deal, and Captain Forrest is one of those people whom I cannot make out. Do you know him, Father Maynard?"

"Oh yes. I have known him from his childhood. I know him very well."

"Do you like him?"

"Yes."

"I suppose I ought not to have asked you?"

"Why not?"

"I don't know exactly, but you are not guilty of giving personal opinions very often."

"I am not unwilling now, however. I like Mrs. Bright, and I like Captain Forrest."

"And did the poor woman like the chicken?"

"There was no chicken. Mrs. Bright was at Worrel, staying with a friend; not expected back for a week, and so Frank went to gaol."

"Oh, he stole the chicken!" exclaimed Edith.

"No;"—smiling at her excitement, which was very real, and very pretty. "No. He borrowed a neighbour's gun, and started off to kill larks. He was passing a field, close to Sir Marmaduke's preserves; he saw the finest of pheasants come out to feed,—he fired. You said some secret words to Kate, of which she told me, Miss Mortimer,—do you recollect them?"

"Yes; *my* mother! Go on."

"What would you have done in Frank's place?"

"Oh, I should have risked my life for that pheasant."

"Well, he gave six months of his life for it, and lost it too. He fired, killed it, and had it safe in his pocket. He was grasped stoutly. He fought for the pheasant. Sir Marmaduke, himself, jumped over the fence, and came to the rescue of his gamekeeper. Frank was overpowered, of course. And while he lay, in not at all an edifying

state, in gaol at Worrel, his mother lost her last chances of life. For what Kate said, was true: his going to gaol for her,—*for her*, that was the trial; so depressed her, that she could not rally, and so died, as you saw. Died, Kate told you,—not for the want of chicken—but because Frank was a coward who could not face starvation.”

“It is wonderful. I like the story,” said Edith.

“Like the story! My dear Miss Mortimer, what are you saying? one would think you were reading a novel.”

“Never mind;” said Edith, “You got to know Frank in prison.”

“Yes:—thank God. In that six months I had time and opportunity; and by God’s blessing, much was done. He came out of prison a ruined man—in the world’s eyes, —in the Church’s, a blessed Christian. He had learnt his religion, and had made his first communion.”

“Oh, wonderful!” exclaimed Edith, clasping her hands. “That ends it, beautifully.”

Father Maynard looked a little disheartened. “Please not to forget that these actors in a story are real people; —that they suffer, still; that they are striving now; that they bear the burthen of life.”

“You would not have them my pensioners,” said Edith.

“No. I would have them remembered by you as those who have fought and won, while you have sat still and received. Let them feel that they possess the praise of your approbation, when they deserve it: that your heart has shuddered at their distresses and sympathized with their trials, with a humble loving sympathy—a sympathy that unites itself to a doubt of your heroism, in their circumstances equalling their own.”

Edith looked very grave. Then, still quite grave, she said, “But I think *I could* be heroic. Of course, I never wish to be tried. I like to dream and fancy things. I figure trial to myself, and behave beautifully.”

“Believe me,” said Father Maynard, impressively, it is more wholesome to visit the reality and do good, than it is to fancy scenes, which God has not seen fit to send, and do nothing. But you don’t ask why the father was transported?”



"Oh,—why? Tell me."

"That was Sir Marmaduke's doing; and he did not do wrongly. It was all caused by that silly, jealous covetousness, which is a great snare to a poor man who has no religion."

"Was old Frank a Catholic?"

"Oh, no,"

"What did he do?"

"Joined a set of fanatical rebels who took to rick-burning; and I quite believe that his transportation has saved the souls of his children."

"Well," said Edith, "That case has no relieving feature in it."

"I don't know. What I used to like to contemplate in it, was—the perfect disbelief of his guilt in which his wife lived, and in which she brought up her family: it was really beautiful."

"Poor, dear, unfortunate, hard-suffering woman," said Edith; "I can understand that so well. Oh, it would make one wild to think ill of anybody one really loved. In all my fancyings, I never fancy that. I really could feel sorry for old Frank,—supposing that he loved his family."

"Well, I like that," said Father Maynard; "everyone has a claim upon us."

"Oh, stop. I can't go on so fast. I don't like people to have claims on me."

And Edith laughed, and went away.



## CHAPTER VII.

## STANGROVE-PARK.

A BEAUTIFUL spring came. Still evenings found Edith standing motionless, wrapped up in a warm, soft cloak, a little beyond the yew-tree corner; gazing down a woody dell and listening, while the nightingale mocked all the singing-birds of the air. The scent of hawthorn and sweet-briar, rivalled each other on the breath of evening; and when Sir Godfrey came to bring his child back to the house, their footsteps stirred the violets in their nests, and Edith would pause to draw the lilies of the valley from their dewy leaves. Then her father read prayers in the chapel, where so many ancestors had prayed before, and where mass was restored; and she thought how the *Ave Maria* on Sir Montague's morion had found living echoes among those ancient walls, where it had so long borne silent witness. Still, Edith's heart stood alone, and *her* past and *her* present were enough. It was intensely stupid to leave it all, and dine at Sir Marmaduke Mercer's.

Edith had been to such things several times, now. She gave an account of what the party would be, before she went, and so true did it prove, that Sir Godfrey behaved ill—and laughed, and Lady Sarah was obliged to be doubly agreeable, to hide the scandal of a family joke. One thing occurred that Edith had not contemplated: Lady Mercer, in that languid, yet authoritative way that belonged to her, spoke of Kate Dawson. She had come back, after voluntarily leaving work and choosing to do nothing for three or four months, — wiser, she hoped; begging pardon at all events. Edith asked what had happened to demand this humiliation. “Oh, it was seldom that mill-stories got into the house.” This one had however,

and she had really taken the trouble to speak to Kate, which had been about as beneficial as speaking to a gate-post. But what about? The superintendent, Mr. Carter, a man for whom Sir Marmaduke had the highest respect, had fallen in love with Kate; and the girl had so stood in her own light—that she had not only said No to his most generous and handsome offer, for he would have given her leave to have her sister to live with her; but she had so resented the jokes of the other girls, that it had ended in her leaving. Edith longed to hear more, but could not prolong the conversation. Thus it ended.

This was followed by a visit to Stangrove-park, and that was of a different sort.

“I expect,” said Edith, in the carriage; “I expect this will be a dreadful place.”

“It is a very beautiful place,” said Lady Sarah, “And you will meet new people.”

“I don’t care for people.” Rather abruptly spoken.

“Learn to care.”

“My dear aunt, I never increase my wants,” said Edith, laughing.

Lady Sarah made no answer. They passed through Worrel; then through a coal district, which seemed to be peopled with chimney-sweeps,—the possessors of innumerable donkeys. Everything was black. They had left spring behind them. There was a general dust-and-ashes effect over the whole country, and small children had sore eyes—always.

“I could be interested in these people if——”

“If what?”

“If there was not this pervading smell of hot iron in the air. Where can this air come from?—How do people live in it?”

“How would you have lived this winter but for them, and their work, and their machinery, and——”

“Oh, stop, dear Aunt Sarah, you are too sensible. I want to have my spirits nourished, cherished, sustained. Recollect, I am entering on the realities of Stangrove, where I shall find nothing to interest me. I shall not *talk* again, till I am going home,—I shall only *speak*.

What makes people say you are so very agreeable—Aunt Sarah?”

“Who says so?”—and Lady Sarah laughs.

“Oh, everybody,” says Edith, quite earnestly; “everybody. Mrs. Bright says so, and she is a good judge of the agreeable, I am sure, my lady! How much I like to see her take off that glove—lavender kid, sewn with black—and daintily touch some piece of her lovely old china. Was she ever any other than Mrs. Bright?”

“When I was here at six years old, she was a girl of ten or twelve, I think. Martha says she used to bring me little blue garlands of wild forget-me-nots—and that the blowing of these garlands in water, within the circle of a saucer, was a great pleasure to my invalidship, when I had the measles.”

“And in those days her name was——.”

“Herbert,” said Lady Sarah. “It seems odd—but I don’t know where they lived.”

“That I know,” said Edith. “They must have rented the old house of grandpapa, in which Farmer Reeves lives. Norman told me yesterday, when I was admiring the house, that it would never have come to be a farmhouse but for those Miss Herberts both marrying on one day. Who did the other marry?”

“The Miss Herberts married two brothers. The younger was Captain Forrest’s father.”

“But to return to yourself, Aunt Sarah—I don’t like laughing at Mrs. Flasher; she did well in her way, in that sad moment—but she delights in you; and you quite *try* to be agreeable to her?”

“Perhaps I do.”

“But why? Tell the whole truth.”

“She likes me because I am very rich,” said Lady Sarah; and Edith exclaims—“Oh! delightful.” “And because I have a pedigree from the ancient Britons.” Edith clasps her hands and stifles her laughter. “And because I am ‘my lady,’—adds her aunt with a smile.

“And you see through it all, and take pains to make her like you—I could not do that,”—exclaims Edith.

“I would rather she liked me, than the accidents of my

birth. I would use those accidents to influence her. She is an ignorant, but not a weak woman. She has never had any advantages. I should like her to think me all that a Catholic gentlewoman ought to be—it might lead her to respect the faith. I think, *I owe this* to the faith. I don't understand a disagreeable Catholic."

"Why, aunt, you are a missionary. That is your gift, and—and it is not mine." And Edith snuggled herself up in the corner. But her aunt would not let her off.

"It is your *duty* Edith, to adorn the Church; you are not like Mrs. Flasher."

"For which, thanksgiving!"—exclaimed the snuggled-up young lady; settling herself still more cozily in her corner; and not troubling herself to speak above her breath. "But it's no great admission for your charity to make, dear aunt. I am afraid that I couldn't choose such terrifying dresses—somehow, I never see them. I am not able to speak with that extraordinary twang. And I have a rooted conviction that I should do myself some serious and never-to-be-recovered-from injury, if I, even once only, *plumped* into a chair as she does. I wonder every time that the chair outlives Mrs. Flasher. It is to the credit of the maker, and should be remembered of him."

But Edith observed that her aunt did not seem to hear her, and she did not seem to answer her when she said—

"It is the spirit of the Church to be thankful. How thankful, then, for those outside, who live without instruction, and pass through life without the sacraments—how thankful, then, for them, if we see honest purpose, and merciful deeds. Oh, God! I thank Thee for a true wife, a loving mother, a kind mistress, a well-wishing neighbour, a giver to the poor. I may not scorn whom Thou hast saved from scandal, and from heinous sin. But I would ask to edify her, and to adorn Thy church in her sight." Edith stayed silent. But soon Lady Sarah remarked the change of scenery, and they were admiring its loveliness, gazing from the window, as they passed over a bridge, and ascended a hill-side, where dark yew and golden willow mingled light and shade, and crowned and adorned huge marbled masses of limestone rock.

"Oh, this is beautiful!" cries Edith, and Lady Sarah smiles upon her. "How sweetly the palm smells—I wonder if the willow was ever used for palm—we must be getting near Stangrove. There is a guide-post—'Stangrove Park, two miles.'"

They were at the top of the hill, and a fine country—so unlike the coal lands they had left—spread itself out for many miles, till, far away, it was lost in a line of sparkling sea, which mingled with the clouds. After one mile, they came to an entrance. A woman ran out from an Italian cottage—or the nearest thing to a cottage that Italian taste can create—and opened the cast-iron gates, which swing within a towering arch, surmounted by the Stangrove crest. A wide gravel-road through sloping lawn-land, a descent to an enormous bridge over a very little stream; then up to a grove of high elms, all rich in red flower, and bright green seed; then again into sunshine, with the music of rooks, and the glitter of the thousand starry flowers of a primrose bank; then a high wall on the right, and a gable-ended farm rising up, and stacks of corn and hay, and busy voices, and cooing of doves; and speedily passing on by a few giant oaks, and some cedars of enormous size, they made a sweep round, and saw the mansion, so smooth and white, and long-windowed, standing on its velvet lawn, as flat as sunk fences and invisible rails could make it, extending itself into glittering greenhouses and hothouses of all descriptions—and, "Oh! how painfully uninteresting!" said Edith, and her aunt smiled, and then they were come.

Her father and Mr. Stangrove appeared from the greenhouse. A fat milk-white poodle, with a blue ribbon round its neck, looked distrustfully at them from the window, and was only too lazy to bark. A poor little frightened gazelle, with a clog on one foot, lifted its tearfully-bright eyes, and got away, but it was all so blazing, bright, and open, that it could not hide; and Edith entered the house, on her father's arm, and followed Mr. Stangrove, and Lady Sarah, and she said—"Can anybody love such a place as this?"

"You would, if you had been born here."

"No, never, I should not have known what loving wood and stone meant; no one could love such a great broad-faced, unmeaning, open-eyed, expressionless thing as this—and besides, it is deaf and dumb."

Sir Godfrey exclaimed, "Edith, Edith!" but he laughed, and detained her lovingly for a moment, to hear the end.

"I mean," said Edith, looking up into her father's watchful, guardian eyes, "I mean that it has no history. I look at Mortimer Manor, and it tells me what it would take a life to learn perfectly. It is the oldest thing in the parish; it has outlived forest and field, for all things around it have changed; and it has seen all, and outstood all, with the same look on its face, and the same echoes about its walls. And the old trees, with their long arms and their time-worn and scanty foliage, are its friends, and gather round it. And centuries of good names and good deeds belong to those walls. It thrills me to think where *they* are. I think of them with white robes and crowns, who have lived and died, and are held in remembrance *there*; who have prayed; whose prayers, perhaps, have brought us back to their home and their Church."

She stopped, for her father's arm trembled, and his lip quivered, but he did not speak; he pressed her arm fondly to his side, and led her quickly into the house.

In spite of Edith's criticisms, Stangrove-house was a very charming place. There are places where one feels as if one could never be cold; a shiver is as unlikely as an earthquake. Also, nothing ever seems to wear out or fade. Of course people have new carpets, and alter their curtains, but it never seems to be for any other reason than the refreshment of change and the gratification of taste. It would surprise one's nerves to hear a desire expressed that a tablecloth should be darned. In such places there is an exemption from the accidents of life: everything always happens exactly when it should happen; everybody is always in his place; there are never any difficulties. The common-place idea that life is a business, and that everybody has something to do, is an absurdity in such a place. If there is any truth in it, why, the whole

affair is transacted by certain somebodies, who come from no one knows where, and go to equally unheard-of regions, and who are no business of ours. And such was Stangrove; and, as Edith stood amidst gilding and alabaster, she thought of her daily lessons from Martha in the mysteries of housekeeping. She knew perfectly what all about her meant; she had been born in it; but by some mysterious mental process, back came those lessons, and with them a feeling of power and strength. There are four pecks of flour in a bushel, said Edith's interior self, and a quartern loaf is—well, what is it? Alas! she had forgotten; a quarter of something; it couldn't be a sack? Oh! it was gone! But she would learn once more, and never forget it again. "I have Lord and Lady and my charming friend Olivia Reinecourt here," said Mr. Stangrove. He had never ceased talking, but these were the first words Edith had understood. "Olivia is a great pet of mine," their host went on. "I am her trustee, you know. Old Martindale, her godfather, great friend of my father's; poor man, he left her a fine fortune. Too much for a lady, Miss Mortimer; and Forrest is here—capital fellow; makes me quite ashamed with that used-up hand of his; I ought to have gone into the army—and two or three others are in the house. We dine at six. I want to speak to you alone for one moment, Mortimer. Lady Sarah, I ring for my housekeeper to do those honours which I have failed in persuading anyone else to do. Cruel, Miss Mortimer, is not it? Jenkins, show Lady Sarah Tregenna and Miss Mortimer to their rooms."

And they followed a curtseying dame in black satin, who walked softly, like a cat, and spoke with solemn sweetness, and evidently felt that perfection and herself were on the most intimate terms. She whispered a few words to Edith's maid on the subject of refreshments, the result of which was tea in Sèvres china; and then the rest came, of sofa, and book, and talk, and meditation, all of which took place in Lady Sarah's room, through which was Edith's; and after that, change of dress and adornments, and mutual approval, and the descent to the drawing-room.



The kind reader has not forgotten Edith's beauty or expression, or stature,—all ought to be remembered at this moment. She is very grand for one so young and small; and her aunt, by her side, is so young-looking for one so still and self-possessed, and stately; and as this aunt comes into the room she starts. It was no more than an instant's surprise, but it left a red spot on her cheek; and Edith looked with a quick glance of alarm, and then followed her eye to where it rested on a young man speaking to her father; he was so like him that he looked like the shadow of his youth. Captain Forrest slipped aside to let them pass, but there was an odd look on *his* face, too. Mr. Stangrove introduced his guests, but Edith scarcely saw or heard,—she was thinking of him who was so like her hero of a father, who had his hair, his brow, his eye, his smile; who looked like his son; who evidently admired him as he ought to be admired; to whom her heart was kind involuntarily. And her father's voice answered her thoughts:

“Edith, this is your cousin Angus.”

But, as Edith gave her hand she blushed crimson, and never lifted her eyes to his face.

Oh Menadarva, with its towering chestnuts and its shady paths, the wreathing evening smoke, which told of day's works done among the village labourers, and the ready food,—the village that had been their own! She sees the church-tower above the oaks on the green; she hears the ripple of the brook, and the music of the sacred bells. But a little time ago she was a child among it all, and all is gone, and she is a child no more. The love of her early years has passed away from her; she never thinks of it if she can help it. And now, with her heart quaking, and every effort used to remain still, and to look unmoved and feelingless, she hears Mr. Stangrove:

“They have not made the slightest change, Angus tells me,—imported a touch of Presbyterianism, that's all,—ha, ha! I am going there; I have a great fancy to see it. Quite a romance, the whole thing. I have been talking of it here: we all have; Forrest, what do you want?”

"I beg your pardon ; I was speaking to Miss Mortimer."

Edith looks at Captain Forrest. He says he only wanted to show her a very curious plant in that brilliant stand. So Edith goes to see the plants, reads unreadable names ; and when dinner is announced, goes out of the room with her companion, and thinks him very agreeable. She is great enough to say to him, that she observes the likeness between Angus and her father ; and she perseveringly accustoms herself to talk of him ; and Captain Forrest says neither too much nor too little, yet encourages the subject. And when dinner is over, Edith is quite calm, and pronounces herself a conqueror. She determines that it shall be a very perfect work, so, when Angus comes to the drawing-room, she speaks to him, and asks after Mr. and Mrs. Macdonnel ; she is not equal to hoping that they like Menadarva, but she tells him he is like her father,—and that is a great victory.

It brightens up Angus a good deal. He sits down by her side and goes into the pedigree.

His father and her grandfather were first cousins. His grandmother was a Mortimer. "She had the Mortimer face and hands," says Angus, putting his own hands modestly under the table, "and she was so like Sir Godfrey ; her picture—the picture in Scotland—is so like him, and very like me," stammers out Angus, for Edith is looking at him.

This is enough for the first evening ; he gets away to his friend, and tells him that he feels a thief and a coward, and generally a being quite unfit to live ; and that he is miserable, on account of that distracting will, that put them like a pack of burglars at Menadarva.

Captain Forrest never contradicts this. He asks about his father and mother.

To which Angus replies that those dear, excellent people are rested, and solaced, and supported by certain phrases quite necromantic in their effect. His mother looks down and says, "It is ruled !" His father gazes up and says, "It is ordered !" "Now I," says Angus, "have my sentence to choose, so I look straight forward and say

*'It is blotted out!'* And I will marry that stately little beauty, with whom I have been desperately in love, behind the scenes, ever since I saw her one night at the Opera, more than a year ago,—and make it all right again."

And Captain Forrest says, "No, you won't."

The evening went on; and in a music-room, where the light was tinted rose, and the air was fragrant; where Tom Moore might have written "*Lalla Rookh*," and where not even Longfellow could have jolted hexameters,—there Edith sung with her father, with her aunt, by herself, and better than she had ever sung before.

Ugly old bald-headed Time was mowing down his thousands somewhere, but not there. Heroic fathers turned from the suppers which were not enough for all, and said that they were not hungry,—but not there. No future, no past, only the perpetual, ever-present *now*—the pleasure-loaded present.

It was the general opinion that Stangrove-park was one of the most delightful places in the world; and, as we have said, Edith never sung so well before.

In those moments of sincerity which follow "Good night," Lady Reinecourt said that if that girl had not been penniless, poor creature, she could not have wished a better wife for dear Dudley.

Olivia, whose two thousand a year had made her wonder what on earth anybody wanted money for, did not see that the pecuniary objection was a valid one. She never had seen so attractive a creature.

But her mother, who was a very well-made machine, constructed of the hardest oak, secretly cramped with iron, told her not to say that to Dudley, or he might make an idiot of himself.

Then their maids brushed their hair; and they settled their next-morning dresses; and they yawned, and were tired; and they said their prayers and went to bed. And Stangrove was almost more luxurious than Reinecourt. And it was the very thing to be desired, and so they slept. But Edith and her aunt had said a Litany together that night. "Who didst lie in a manger—Who hadst not where to lay Thy head, have mercy on us!" And Edith

hid her face in her hands, and scalding tears forced their way, and she said, "Oh, aunt! after all, poverty is better than riches. I mean comparative poverty, such as ours. There are some things that are too terrible a contrast to the Cross; and I am stronger, better, happier without them. There is more of reality, more of truth, in their absence; and strength and dignity always go with truth. There is no wisdom in listening to the lull of luxury, there is no health in its inaction, and its ignorance of facts is folly. If I have ever regretted Menadarva in that way, I will try never to do it again."

The young girl spoke eagerly, and looked up with an agitated face; but a beautiful peace returned to it in a moment, and she dwelt on her aunt's almost unearthly loveliness with a smile. Lady Sarah wore a face of gladness so serene, so triumphant and yet so thoughtful—she kissed her niece on her forehead; on her lips—as if her heart was too full for words. And when she spoke, it was only to say, with a smile that seemed to make the whole room bright, "Yes, Edith, yes; poverty is better than riches. Almighty God said it long ago." And Edith slept, cradled in the arms of Mother Church, safe in the love of God. The morning came, as beautiful as of course mornings always were at Stangrove—as beautiful as England ever knew.

"Generally, as a rule, people are dull at breakfast," says Mr. Stangrove in the hall; "Miss Mortimer, you never look dull. Lady Sarah, good morning. I have been up two hours preparing pleasure for at least *one* of my guests"—he bowed to Edith, and then explained that he had a very good collection of armour and weapons of offence, and he hoped she liked armour; and Capt. Forrest, who knew all about such things, would teach her anything she did not know: and so within an hour after breakfast, amid treasures which Sir Samuel Meyrick might have envied, Edith was being shown the birth, progress, and perfection of fire-arms, and had herself taken a pistol to pieces and put it together again as no woman but the Princess Charlotte is ever supposed to have done before. She is highly interested, her father is charmed, Capt.

Forrest is proud of his pupil, and Mr. Stangrove has begun to talk about it—it will be a story for the rest of his life—but Angus Macdonnel is miserable, and in a fit of desperation he has gone to Lady Sarah and told her his hopes, his fears, his plans, and his love.

Lady Sarah was sitting in the breakfast-room by herself, working worsted and silk into canvass. Angus, on a low ottoman, had told his story. But the lady planted her stitches side by side as firmly and steadily as if she had never known hope or fear in all her life.

“I wish you to understand how important this is to me,” said Angus, beseechingly.

“Nonsense,” said Lady Sarah.

He started up and sat down again. “It will be the misery of my life if it does not come to pass.”

“You have been reading novels,” said the lady.

“You will drive me mad,” said the gentleman; and he paced the room a good deal as if his words were coming true.

Steadily, steadily, with a little crackling sound, the needle went in and came out; she looked as if she had done it all her life and was going to do it for ever. Angus paused, and stood before her.

“I am coming to Mortimer Manor next month.”

“Sir Godfrey will be very glad to see you, of course.”

“I shall come to see Edith.”

“You had better not waste your time.”

“Are you going to teach her to hate me?”

Angus was getting angry; Lady Sarah looked up.

“Edith requires no teaching; she knows how to respect herself, and will marry as becomes her at the proper time, no doubt. You are not to pursue this subject any further now, Mr. Macdonnel. I don’t wish my niece to marry you. You feel very honourably about Menadarva, no doubt; but you would have had no such fancies if Edith had not been the peculiarly charming person she is. But make your conscience easy, no one cares for Menadarva; and if I thought she required to be influenced against you, I should use all the influence I possess to prevent her liking you.”

Angus moped for the remainder of the day, and the next morning left the house, pretending to be called away by a letter just received.

A large party dined at Stangrove. Among them was a Catholic family called Thetford. Mr. and Mrs. Thetford, their son Henry, and their eldest son's widow, Mrs. Frank Thetford, who, when she was a child, had known Lady Sarah, and was glad to see her again. Mrs. Frank Thetford was young—about twenty-five, and a very charming person. The Catholics were all glad to meet: they had heard of each other, and had wanted an introduction.

With them Edith found a depository of ancient lore; the whole topography of the country was in their possession. Stangrove-park became another place as soon as they entered it. It did Edith good to hear Mrs. Frank Thetford say, "Oh, don't let us wander about those artificial conservatories, where everything exists out of season; let us go to the Old House."

"The Old House, where is that?"

"The place they sacrilegiously call 'The Farm,'" she said; "have you not observed the great rookery and those ancestral oaks and cedars? There is a chapel there, turned into a granary. The pigsties have coats of arms on them. Don't you understand heraldry? No? What a disgrace! I'll teach you."

And these days were delightfully spent, only Mrs. Frank Thetford would not let Mr. Stangrove show the old vestments or the altar-furniture which he reported himself as possessing, and taking great care of in an old church chest.

"No, no, Mr. Stangrove, no exhibition of that sort while I am here; I will go away if you insist on it; I should feel as if I consented to the spoil if I only looked at it; I wonder some priest does not rise from the grave and claim his own. Did you ever see any ghosts?"

Mr. Stangrove did not like this. Secretly, Edith was glad to see him routed. Even Lady Sarah smiled, and Sir Godfrey was Mrs. Thetford's most humble servant.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## NEW FRIENDS.

THERE are in this country, a few persons, whose lives form no part of its written history, whose names are not known to fame, who have had no poet; but who live—live, and shall live, and have lived, from generation to generation, where the just are had in everlasting remembrance.

It is not that these persons have not formed a part, and a very important part of this country's history — but it is that they have acted out their lives nobly, where good deeds are felt, but not recorded. That they have been called to unseen lives, to sufferings, anxieties, losses, successes, and triumphs, all endured and worked out, where the hate of an evil generation did not fall; or fell, with its seeking eye and persecuting hand, only after long intervals; not knowing how its mighty will was braved and put aside, and God's work done in the face of the world that would not have Him. Of such persons were the Thetfords, of Thetford Royals. From remote times they had lived on those ancestral acres; and under their care the poor had lived in a primitive state of peace and protection; all treading the old paths, and holding to the ancient faith. They had known many of the ups and downs of life. But not for an hour had one of that truly great name been treacherous to the trust which Almighty God had confided to them. Fines had reduced one to poverty, but gold had no charm for him, and poverty no terror; for the true faith was everything to the house of Thetford. No history told of the hero who worked with his own hands, where he had long commanded service.

Another had come out of prison, cramped and lamed for

life, of fever caught there: the deformed and the feeble were as strong in spirit as ever, and all the hearts on the estate bowed down before the master who had suffered for the faith, and thanked God and our Lady for him.

Still, religion went on at Thetford Royals. Still, the God of heaven and earth inhabited there. What was it that they would not have done for Him, and His honour?

Still, they parted from their children, under pretences and in disguise, that they might get abroad that education and Catholic training which could not be got in England. Even women's hearts were still, and mothers never wept. They trusted their best to God. Never in high places,—never seeking power,—never greedy of rule,—the Thetfords lived quietly, doing their best, in a life of silent offering and acceptance before God. But if a sound came, of favour to the Church in return for some renunciation; proposals for veiling the glory of the immaculate mother of God; plans for fettering the free action of the Pope in the Church in these kingdoms; or of anything that might enslave the priesthood, or deprive their work of unction; then some Thetford was sure to speak. They would have no bargains. Truth was truth, and should remain whole, and perfect, and one. They would not ask for favour, but justice. They had nothing to yield. More than once, they had stepped forward and stripped temptation of her mask. More than once, others had spoken strongly, bravely, eloquently; because a Thetford had been simple-minded and sincere. And so they had walked on their firm and quiet way, recording angels writing the history of Thetford Royals, and writing it in the book of life.

And now, Mr. Thetford was walking with Sir Godfrey Mortimer in the shade of the yew trees, by the farm, where the old mansion and the chapel had stood, and was telling—for Sir Godfrey had asked him to tell—something of the vicissitudes of his house.

Mr. Stangrove had, that very morning, said several things which had interested Sir Godfrey very much.

“Old Thetford, sir,” he began. “This man's father, was one of the first scholars in the country,—and spoke



French and Italian, and Spanish, sir—oh, you should have heard him; such a grace he had in his pronunciation. He was an antiquary, too, and a painter,—helped me with his judgment often, when I was buying pictures and curiosities, and had more money than knowledge. Ah, I owe him great obligations—formed my taste, entirely. A very considerable herald, sir, too—brought up at some Jesuit school, abroad. Oh, sir; those are the men—on my honour, they know everything! Well—Thetford, sir, old Thetford, he was born with a love of learning, it was in him, and couldn't be restrained. There is a story told—a gossiping story, I don't know anything of its truth. They say, that if he had had brothers, he would have taken to the Church; but that as he was the last of the Thetfords, he was discouraged, and prevailed on to come home after his parents' death. He did come home, and seldom went into society, for he was poor, very poor. Thetford Royals is now worth about a thousand a year. Then, it was heavily mortgaged. He farmed it himself, to pay off the mortgages and to repair the old house. He farmed it himself—I don't believe he allowed himself more than three or four hundred a year. He was no more in his life, or in his appearance, than a real country farmer; and for a long time, never went into society. I know it is true, for my father held the mortgages; and to me—to *me*, sir, just as I came of age—old Thetford paid off the last. He died, ten years after he had freed Thetford Royals, and he had married an heiress, Miss Derham, a fine woman, and a little of a devotee. It was said, that she was in love with their history, though what their history was, beyond mortgaging their property to my father and grandfather, I really don't know!

“But,” Mr. Stangrove went on, and Edith listened all the time, and looked from his animated face to her father's thoughtful one; “but, it proved an excellent match. She had one son—this very man, and one daughter. The daughter is a nun, in a convent abroad. When old Thetford died, then the widow also became a nun; she's dead now. My friend came into his father's—mother's property, at one stroke. Thetford had two sons. Frank,

sir, the perfection of a young man. Ah, Miss Mortimer; a hero! so fine a creature, so good, so clever; well educated too, and married young, just as he came of age—to Miss Hearne, with a great fortune. The most devoted young couple that ever were seen; isn't his widow charming?"

They both say that she is very charming. And then Mr. Stangrove goes on.

"Well, they all lived together. The young couple were the same age, within a month. They were the admiration of the neighbourhood. She had had a large settlement made upon her. I was one of the trustees. And when Frank was killed"—

"Killed?" cries Edith—and "Killed!" exclaimed Sir Godfrey.

"Yes, oh yes;" said their voluble host. "Yes. I thought you knew. I'll tell you how it was. Helen Thetford—that is, Mrs. Frank Thetford—was, and is, a wonderful horse-woman; oh, you must see her——"

But Edith could not bear any digression, and gently whispers—"But, he was killed!"—and brings Mr. Stangrove back to the point.

"Killed in this way," he says. "Thetford had bought Mrs. Frank a horse—the gentlest, best-broken beast imaginable. In a fine summer evening, the creature was brought out for her to see. She asked her husband to lead him about, and he did so. Over the fence he led him. He went over, gently, quietly, exquisitely: I was there. I had been dining there. I can never forget it."

Mr. Stangrove turned aside his head for a moment, and pretended to see something worth noticing, from the window. Edith did not hurry him now. She had never respected him so much. "Well," he went on, "he led the horse over the fence again beautifully—she cried out, 'Back again, Frank—beautiful, beautiful?' So, back jumped Frank, and the horse went after him too quickly—slipped, we thought, after examining the top of the fence—however, Frank was down, and the horse upon him. And when I lifted him up, I knew his hours were few."

"How long did he live?"

"Till the next morning. He was perfectly sensible. I asked to stay, and they permitted me. Oh, it was a glorious sight." And again, Mr. Stangrove turned away.

"It must have made you close friends," whispers Edith.

"Yes, yes ;" answers Mr. Stangrove, "I knew how to estimate them better for those hours. I didn't, I don't understand it. But, still *I felt* it, and feel it now. It was all glorious. And then the sun rose upon the sea—the last Frank ever saw. And she never left him. I was allowed to stand by the door of an adjoining room, with poor little Henry holding my hand. It was the very sudden surrender of a very precious treasure. But there was no agony of fear, or even of sorrow; and I don't think that Frank had one sorrowing thought for the world he was leaving, though he had been so happy in it. I spoke to him once. I said, 'This has come at a wrong time, as it were, my friend. I grieve for you!' He answered—as he pressed my hand, 'Death comes always at the time that is the very best possible time for our souls to meet it in. It is His time—it is mine.' It was all I could bear. So I went to the east breakfast-room, and watched the sun-light coming up. Then his mother stood by me. 'It is nearly day,' I said. 'The everlasting day has dawned on him,' she answered. I wept like a child, Miss Mortimer."

"Thank you for telling me," said Edith—her own eyes bright with moisture. "But I don't think my aunt knows that Mr. Frank Thetford was killed. She had seen Miss Hearne when she was a little girl, and had heard of her marriage; but surely, not of her husband's violent death."

"Very likely not," said Mr. Stangrove. "You know, the Thetfords have not lived much before the world, as people call it."

"I want to know more," said Edith.

"And I had nearly forgotten the last part of my story," said Mr. Stangrove. "You recollect, I told you I was a trustee of their marriage settlement. Well; when all was over—they buried him in the little churchyard they have down there, by the most odious building in the world—which is the village chapel—they buried him there; and

then she came here, as soon as she went anywhere, and met the other trustee—Sir Martin Knightley, and the lawyers, and arranged for the return to Mr. Thetford of all her jointure. And this was done: she asked, however, to live with them. She has only one relation in the world—her father's sister, who lives at Florence, married to some man who is counted rich in that country, I believe," concluded Mr. Stangrove, with a gentle smile.

"They like to have her?" said Edith. "But the horse—I can't help being interested in the horse?"

"Poetic justice befel the horse, Miss Mortimer. The fine creature was so injured, that it never could have stood any more. There, where it lay, it was shot. But this all happened six, seven, or eight years ago. We cease to mourn—cease to think—to think even of the dead. The grave closes cold and dark; they are dead." Mr. Stangrove spoke slowly, and with a stern, sad gravity. "It is wise to cease to think," he added, more cheerfully: then, in his usual lively tones—"Come, come, let us have a ride this morning, Mortimer—Langleigh Abbey! Shall we see those ruins, glorious in decay?"—he turned to ask Edith, but she had moved away, saying to herself, "They are *not* dead—or, *that* is not *their* death. Cold and darkness is no name for 'the moonlight world' of such who have been alone with God, and seen it written in His face that their hopes are realized, that they are of the redeemed, and who live, through their waiting, upon the security of that knowledge and its awful gladness. They are not dead—such is not their death."

Edith went to Lady Sarah, and told what she had heard. It was all new to her aunt. It was indeed true, that the Thetfords, of Thetford Royals, had not lived before the world. And the ride to Langleigh Abbey was postponed; and Sir Godfrey and Mr. Thetford talked like old friends, as they walked by the yew trees.

The day came for the Mortimers to return home. Mr. and Mrs. Thetford promised to pay Mortimer Manor a visit. "Sixteen miles," Sir Godfrey said, "was too much for a morning call. Thetford was as far from Mortimer Manor as from Stangrove. The call, now that they knew

each other, must occupy two or three days." And it was agreed that it should be so.

But Mr. Stangrove, seeing his guests happy, entreated them to stay a couple more days. And he presses it so pleasantly, and is so positive that they must have a day at Langleigh Abbey, which is too far from both Mortimer and Thetford Royals to be seen without more fuss and fatigue than should belong to pleasure, that at last they all consent to stay, and Captain Forrest stays too.

Edith is pleased to remain, as she has begun to be extremely interested in Mrs. Frank Thetford. And she likes Mr. Thetford, too, for he very evidently admires her father; and shows that he understands him; and knows how true a spirit dwells with that gracious unaffected manner, which is gentle and real like a child's, and belongs to a nature which is made up of reverence, fortitude, and generosity. Neither is Mrs. Thetford, the elder, at all disagreeable to Edith. She has private opinions about Mrs. Thetford being inoffensive, and a little stupid, though very well-behaved. And she picks up her ball of worsted, and talks of the number of stitches most desirable for forming the best-sized winter mittens, and matches the needles by the wire gage, and hopes that she has made herself very agreeable. Mrs. Thetford receives all Edith's little common-place attentions very quietly and very kindly; she admires the beautiful girl with the earnest and fanciful talk, which Helen has repeated to her; and when she takes the needles from her hand, or thanks her for the ball of worsted, she—being a very common-place person indeed, without the smallest tincture of romance—says a prayer to the Queen of Heaven, in her secret heart, for the motherless girl, who has had no Catholic training in childhood, and has become a convert to the true faith, before the judgment of womanhood has grown to its perfect strength.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE PICTURESQUE.

THE day came for seeing Langleigh Abbey. It dawned with mist and cloud, and then the sun broke through the veil, and lighted up the world and made it glad with its warmth. Everybody said something in praise of the weather, and congratulated each other on the pleasure of mere existence on such a day and in such scenes.

Some of the gentlemen went on horseback; the ladies all went in carriages.

"Shall you be tired if you drive my pony-phaeton, Mrs. Frank Thetford?"

Helen assures Mr. Stangrove that she shall like to drive the ponies. And Captain Forrest is to be their escort on horseback; and a servant is to occupy the seat behind. "And whom will you drive, Mrs. Frank Thetford?"

"Miss Mortimer," says Helen.

"Oh, thank you! I shall like that," cries Edith. And Mr. Stangrove is charmed to have pleased them.

Then Lady Sarah, Mrs. Thetford, and Sir Godfrey, go in another carriage; and Mr. Stangrove and Mr. Thetford on horseback. And a groom in a gig with wine and eatables is to be at Langleigh Abbey, in time to unpack his store of good things, and take their horses on arriving. And thus they all set out.

At first Edith was silent. She asked herself why? Her heart answered—because she was in a little fear of Helen. Why did she fear? There came thoughts of Helen's very bright, yet soft, large, dark, laughing, inquiring, and secret-finding, and must-be-answered eyes. They penetrated—no, not they only, but her whole coun-

tenance—all was so truthful, that you could not look at her straight in the face, and be insincere. “Am I insincere?”—asked Edith’s heart. “No—but you like her to admire you, and you are afraid lest she should admire you less, after this long *tête-à-tête*. And it is a little your tendency to act for admiration, when you want it, though you do appear so very much above all care about pleasing anybody, when you are with Mrs. Trotman and Mrs. Flasher,” answers Edith’s conscience to her heart. While this is going on within, Captain Forrest rides up to Helen’s side. “How well you ride,” says Helen. Captain Forrest bows. “How well you drive,” he says. “I did not mean—‘How well you ride,’” she answers, laughing. “I mean, how well you manage with one hand.”

“Oh!—I understand now. You don’t know how stupid I am about compliments. You see I have my whip fastened to this peg in the saddle. But my hand is nearly well. I shall not lose any fingers, or have any stiff. Old Trotman has cured me.”

“Old Trotman. I know all the pedigrees for twenty miles round. But I don’t know old Trotman.”

“He is Mrs. Trotman’s father.”

“Then he is called Evans.”

“Oh, is he?”—says Henry Forrest in a bewildered way. And Edith laughs.

“Do you know Steeplehill, Mrs. Thetford,” asked Edith.

“Yes. I know Mrs. Bright—and I know—we all know”—correcting herself with a smile—“We all know Captain Forrest very well. And I know Mrs. Vine at the inn, for we have often posted through Steeplehill, going to London—we are still twenty miles from a railway, you know.”

“But did you ever see our house?”

“No. I have been many hours, many times, in the village, but I never went to the Manor House.”

“I can’t help wondering at that,” said Edith. “It has a name, and is very interesting.” Edith felt a very little mortified.

“It is interesting now,” answered Helen, turning her

radiant face towards Edith, with a smile that went straight to her heart. "But when good Mr. Norman brewed his beer in the west end of the chapel, and stored the barrels in the east end, it was painful—painful to Catholics—very." Edith blushed.

"It was very good beer. I formed my taste there as a boy," said Captain Forrest.

This gave the idea reality, and Edith was almost vexed.

"You have other tastes now," said Helen, with gravity. And Henry Forrest said he should ride on, and let them overtake him at the foot of the hill.

"You can understand," said Helen, gently, "that when they who, by God's great grace, have lived in the faith from generation to generation without ever conforming, see a neighbour's house—a house that might have been so influential—that might have gained such honour for God, as He of His infinite condescension chooses to ask for and accept—when they see such a house lost to the Church and to themselves, there is something grievous in it."

"Yes. I understand that." And Edith made an act of humility for the deeds of the past.

"But don't you feel the same," she asked, brightening, "at such a sight as Langleigh must be?"

"Oh no. The history of the monks of Langleigh is all edification. They suffered for their country and the Church. Sorrow is not for Langleigh; only for such as made Langleigh what it is."

"For such as the Mortimers," said Edith.

"I am afraid they had something to do with it. But holy men return good for evil. Let us think that the persecuted monks have prayed you back to your true place in the Church."

"A cheerful view; so I shall take it," said Edith.

"Does the old chapel at Thetford stand?" Edith asked, after a pause.

"No. The chapel was pulled down in Elizabeth's reign. Hiding holes were substituted. There is one in the roof, where mass has been said very often. Mr. Thetford has the vestments and altar-furniture used there



in those times. I think the house-chapel which is now used must have been a room originally."

They talked a little longer of the house and its architecture; and then they overtook Captain Forrest. Conversation on various subjects followed, and Edith did her part tolerably well,—we might say *very* well, considering that her thoughts were far away, with Mr. Stangrove's account of the young woman by her dead husband, as the sun rose upon the waters, and the everlasting day dawned on Frank Thetford.

They soon reached Langleigh Abbey, and joined the others of the party. It was the first time that Edith had seen a ruin of a religious house with Catholic knowledge. Now, with Mrs. Frank Thetford for a guide, she could see what had been, as well as what was."

"Where were the altars?" Edith asks.

"Not at the west-end, where you are looking," Helen answers. "Turn round, and walk down here. The west window—and it is a wonderful window—is perfect; the doorway you see. Now you are walking up the nave. There before us is the blue sky, and a lovely country spread out like a picture over that low wall. But where that low wall is stood the high altar, and the Lady Chapel was behind; and when Her chapel was destroyed, the east end came down, they say. Now you can see by the broken pillars where the aisles were; and the transept walls stand firmly, you see. Look at those tombs. The brasses have been pulled off; the figures destroyed; but the bodies have not been disturbed. This one is said to be the tomb of one of the abbots,—another there,—another there. And look here; this is what I have brought you to this transept to see. On this tomb the foot of the figure remains, though mangled; you feel the spurs. On this end, if you stoop down very low, you can see a coat of arms. The wall has sheltered it; you can feel what the arms are."

Captain Forrest stands by.

Edith feels, and says, "I can find out a line, and some lumps. I am no wiser. Tell me what it means."

"It means the arms of Thetford," says Helen. "This

is where Sir Francis Thetford lies. The arms are Or, on a bend gules, three caltraps argent."

"What are caltraps?" asks Edith.

"Horrid things with points in them," answers Captain Forrest, "which, in old warfare, were thrown among the cavalry to impede their progress and injure the horses."

"The poor horses!" exclaimed Edith. "I am glad they don't use them now."

"How fond she seems of horses," said Helen, smiling.

And Edith did not like this; for she recollected that Helen's husband's name had been Frank—he was called after the old knight lying there, no doubt—and that a horse had killed him; and she wonders disagreeably over the seeming unconsciousness with which Helen speaks. "Perhaps Mr. Stangrove is right," Edith thinks; "we forget even the dead; it is many years ago."

Edith's musings are disturbed by Captain Forrest saying, "I never knew who this was. I have been here three or four times, as a boy, but I had no idea that any Thetfords lay here."

"Ah, you have been reading other pages of life than those in county history. I assure you it is all duly recorded."

"But do you know no more than those historians tell. To me it is rather a sad turning over of dead men's dashed hopes and forgotten wills to read of,—'So much to the priest who shall say the first mass on his patron's day, and so much to the server, and so much to the monks who shall devoutly recite such and such prayers for the souls in purgatory, and the good of the Church and our father the Pope,'—and then I come to the place where an earthly perpetuity of this sort of thing was provided for, and I find myself standing on green grass, among ivied ruins, and tombs exposed to birds and beasts by day and by night, and deserted by man. And of the great and good whose head planned long years of prayer and perpetual remembrance, there remains the battered feet of what was once his effigy, and 'a line and three lumps,' which you explain into a coat of arms, Mrs. Thetford. Do you know no more? I am not in love with old abbey hunting. It is

war of a bad style that has been waged here ; and people come and look upon its desolation, and are pleased—oh, more than pleased—charmed, delighted, and call it glorious—‘ glorious in decay,’ said Mr. Stangrove,—‘ the very pride of our neighbourhood.’ I am not romantic, Mrs. Thetford. There is cold chicken and ham under the walnut-trees yonder, and possibly champagne. Pray, let us go to them, for I see you know no more.”

He spoke as between jest and earnest. And Edith smiled to see Mrs. Thetford looking at him so kindly and amused.

“ There is a tradition,” she said, “ that a Thetford, a monk, fled from this place, when all were turned out, to The Royals, and there lived and died unmolested as the priest of the house.”

“ Oh, it is in the great book,—and I am melancholy enough. Listen to Mr. Stangrove’s laugh ; the place echoes with it, and it does me good ; there is such an intense forgetfulness in it.”

“ Listen to me first,” said the lady. “ He brought to Thetford Royals customs such as you spoke of. Sir Francis’s endowments were gone, but those masses and prayers have never been forgotten there. I stand by his tomb, the widow of the last of the house who bore his name ; and I know we are all one. Many and many a time have I offered my devotions at mass, and the solemn prayers for the dead, and for Mother Church and the holy Father, because he willed that it might be so ; and the Thetfords have always believed that a heavenly gift of interior peace and strength has fallen on the heads of their house because of Sir Francis, and because they have never omitted the devotions that the monk of Langleigh taught them in those last years when he was forgotten of his enemies, and brought mass to Thetford Royals. In such a strange way did our little mission have its rise. The masses there represent, as much as it is possible to represent, the glories of this once most glorious Langleigh.”

“ Well,” said Captain Forrest, pausing, lifting his hat from his head, and passing his hand across his open forehead,—“ well, that is reality ; but still I am thinking that

there would be no romance in Langleigh Abbey—only desolation, as I said before—no romance, except for Thetford Royals.”

Mrs. Frank Thetford smiled, and Edith exclaimed, “Thank you, thank you, you have exactly said what I was thinking.”

The luncheon under the walnut-trees was very good, and justice was done to it. Mr. Stangrove would lionize Sir Godfrey himself. Sir Godfrey had never seen the Abbey since he was a boy of sixteen, when he had been at it in a fishing excursion. But, first of all, Mr. Stangrove produced a large-sized sketching book, and came up to Helen. “Now, my dear friend, you know I am a beggar; you very often have obliged me,—so often that you can’t leave the habit off, I fancy.” She took possession of book, paints, and pencils,—sent Captain Forrest for some clean water, and, still talking to Edith, began to sketch the outline of that part of the ruins that stood before them. Edith admired the unaffected ease with which she did as she was asked to do, as much as the skill with which she worked. In a minute Captain Forrest was back again.

“Now you two talk, and let me listen,” said Helen. “I can talk while I pencil, but not while I paint.”

“Miss Mortimer will like going to the ruins again with Mr. Stangrove,” said Henry.

“No, she won’t; she would like to stay with me. Mr. Stangrove is very pleasant and kind, and has a place in the world, and fills it extremely well; but he can’t show Langleigh Abbey. Every one of those who are with him are seeing it with the eyes of their own minds, and not at all as he sees it. See, Lady Sarah has left them. She is lionizing herself; she could not listen to Mr. Stangrove within those walls unless it was her duty to listen to him.”

“Is it ever our duty to listen to people on such subjects when they say what does not interest us?”

“Patience is a virtue,” says Captain Forrest, with a laugh. And Mrs. Thetford says, “Well answered, sir.”

And then there is silence; and Helen colours her drawing very busily, and very cleverly too.

"Please not to watch me so intently; and it will be better worth seeing if you will talk."

But Captain Forrest says he can't talk. And that Langleigh Abbey is a place for meditation. And again he has uttered what Edith thinks.

"Really Lady Sarah is in a very undisciplined state of mind," says Mrs. Frank Thetford. "She has left the ruins—she is coming towards us—she is tumbling over the stones, and catching her shawl in the briars."

"She is saying her beads," exclaims Captain Forrest. "This is the most extraordinary visit to the picturesque that ever was made."

"And, see, Mrs. Thetford comes by herself," says Edith.

"And not at all as Lady Sarah comes," observes Helen. "How carefully she walks; slowly, thoughtfully, too; with an habitual, not a selfish care. She will not make a false step, and not once will her dress be entangled."

"My drawing is finished., Thank you, Captain Forrest, for packing up the paints." And Helen laid down the drawing book and went to meet her mother-in-law.

"They are charming people," Captain Forrest says, looking after Mrs. Frank Thetford.

"Yes. Have you always known them?"

"I knew Frank pretty well as a boy. He was five years my senior. We have met in this very place fishing."

"How calmly she talked of being his widow."

"Because, perhaps, she was talking of the things that have sustained her."

"She must be very lonely at Thetford Royals."

"People are alone, as to the companionship of persons of their own age and of similar pursuits, without being lonely."

"Very true. I suppose that I am alone, but not lonely at all."

"Not to grow selfish must be the hard thing."

"I hate selfishness."

"But there is an exclusiveness, which is rather exquisite, and a sort of pride, which is very picturesque, and people who have a position which can't be shared by the world about them, might possibly—I should think they

might be tempted to enhance self—— and——and——am I preaching a sermon?" says Captain Forrest.

"You are telling the truth," says Edith. And she rises to meet her aunt.

And now they are soon joined by Sir Godfrey and Mr. Stangrove. The drive back is rather silent. And when they meet at dinner, Helen makes excuses for Mrs. Thetford, and says she is tired, and having tea in her bedroom, and not going to appear any more that evening.

After dinner the three ladies sit near an open window; and all is soft and still; and mignonette, and large plants of heliotrope, which have been forced into early flower, scent the air with a luscious sweetness.

They are silent, but have no sense of isolation—they like being together, and know that they are of one mind.

Edith feels this, and says—"This is the companionship of memory; I think, the best part of a pleasure is the thinking of it after it is over."

Lady Sarah says that perhaps it is the test of wholesome and unwholesome pleasure—"Some bear to be thought of calmly and pleasantly—some do not."

"And what do you think?" Edith asks of Helen Thetford.

"And what of trials and afflictions?" says Helen, as if she had not heard Edith, and looking away from them, through the open window to the far-off skies. "If they come back to our memories, with calmness, and even with a certain sweetness on them—does that show that they were not felt, and known in their full reality when their day was?"

"No," answered Edith, firmly, but softly, for she felt as if Helen had read her heart; and she now knew she had been wrong.

"You were surprised," said Helen, taking Edith's hand, "you were surprised to hear me speak so easily of being a widow, knowing, as you did, that Frank lost his life so painfully, and while doing as we asked him—giving us a moment's amusement. These circumstances are thought a good deal of in the world. To him and to me they were nothing. The hour had come. We did not dwell

upon *how* it came. When the shock was over, when I quite understood that I was to live, perhaps a great many years, without him, the flood of natural sorrow was overpowering at first. But when there is no *fear*, the Christian cannot always suffer. As I reviewed his life, and dwelt upon his character, as I best knew it, I knew that God had loved him, as a father loves his child, and that death had given him life and home, and the perfection of that union with God which had been the spirit of his earthly days."

Mrs. Frank Thetford paused for a moment. But neither Lady Sarah or Edith spoke. They seemed to expect her to say more. She went on—"Death shows all things at their true value. It has not chilled my heart. But it has added knowledge to judgment. My affections are as warm, and my interests as true as ever. But the thoughts and the hopes that belong to them go on, beyond this scene of our labouring, to the day of the great harvest, and the rich reward—to where he is. For God took him, that *I*, who had had so much of this world given to me, might not, in the occupation of the earthly blessings, lose the eternal inheritance. And He took *him*, because he was the best. So, my dear young friend," she said, and put her hand in Edith's, "I am not living in the darkness of forgetfulness—neither do I suffer the gnawings of a ceaseless sorrow—for, truly, I am happy. But it is as if, when he, who was like my own life, passed through death into eternity, that I, who was so close to him, had a sight of eternal things, of which the remembrance can never fade away—so that all earthly things are seen at their real worth, and I seem to know, because of that, how best they may be used, for our Blessed Lord's glory. And great joy and brilliancy rests upon life, when I feel, as if He condescended to use me for its accomplishments."

Edith raised the hand she held to her lips, and kissed it, and Lady Sarah wiped her eyes.

Voices were heard outside the window. "It will do you all good to breathe this charming air for a few minutes," said Mr. Stangrove. A very chance sort of robing was made of shawls, that had been left in the hall, when

they got out of the carriage. And soon they were all standing on the gravel-road—and—"Hark! We have nightingales at Stangrove, as well as at the Manor, Miss Mortimer!"

The next day the party separated. To get home again—to get to quietness, peace, and thought, such as only home could give—was delightful to Edith. She had admitted another within her little world, but the fences that shut out all other people, seemed to have grown higher and higher. She thought of all that Helen had said—all that she had heard, and thought of Helen, and dwelt on it, like a miser counting gold. And so thoughts were stored up, and she lived all for herself. And a certain sort of self-consequence grew out of this. As if, in this world, only a few could feel and think, and understand, and as if she herself was first among those few. Oh, Edith!





## CHAPTER X.

## LOVE SCENES.

JUNE burst upon the world. A walk called the Lilac Walk was an avenue of flower and fragrance, to the seat which graced its furthest point, and which looked as if a shower of roses had fallen upon it; roses in bloom and bud of many shades, from darkest red to purest white. Edith had left off mourning. Her mother had been dead above a year, now; and Edith walked the world, in such attire as suited the season and herself. Mr. and Mrs. Thetford, and Mrs. Frank Thetford, came to Mortimer Manor on a visit of a few days; Edith enjoyed it very much. It was the morning talk she enjoyed most, not the evening's, for Sir Godfrey was paying back dinner-parties, and everybody with whom they had dined now dined with them again. But Edith did the honours wonderfully. She smiled most pleasantly when beautiful Eleanor Mercer said, "La! Miss Mortimer, how well you look in that blue glacé. What an odd mixture it is. It is as much silver as blue. Your black hair looks so nice. Who dresses you?" "Oh! I am not a doll, I dress myself," laughed Edith. "But this dress is my aunt's choosing, she gave it to me: this is the first time of wearing. I shall tell her you like it." And Edith talked of new gowns for full ten minutes. And Eleanor told her mother, that Miss Mortimer was uncommonly improved. She sung her best, though all five Miss Flashers stood in a half-moon at her back, and Mrs. Flasher beat no-time-at-all, very loud, with her hand on the elbow of the chair, not a yard off. Even more, when Mrs. Flasher wished Hester to show off in a tremendous duet, with a treble part of a decidedly run-away character, and all her sisters, in turn, shrunk from performing the

hass, then Edith, in the most captivating way, offered to try it herself, and succeeded in exhibiting Hester's brilliancy so well, that the whole family were in perfect happiness for the remainder of the evening. Mrs. Trotman talked of fevers, agues, and all such ills; and she had a certain cure for everybody's "old complaint." Edith, whose health was perfect, was assured that her turn would come some day, and she received the warning very graciously, and promised to give Mrs. Trotman the receipt for the incomparable almond cake,—and did it; did it the next day, which made that lady say to her husband, that there was more in Miss Mortimer than she had supposed: that the beautiful young lady would turn out well after all. Cavendish Trotman copied the receipt into his mother's book, in hopes of being able to appropriate the original. But his mother was too quick for him. She was very proud of that document, and had many persons to display it to; so, after a search, it was found, and pinned into her needle-book; and Cavendish was snubbed for not taking care of it; at which he comforted himself with the thought of how miserable he was, and how little they knew him.

Edith always got on well with Captain Forrest. He was easy, very quiet, gentlemanly, unobtrusive, agreeable; always in the right place, never in the way; attentive, observing, cheerful; not very easily known. But parties at Mortimer Manor went easiest when he was by. Sir Godfrey had got in the way of saying "Forrest, of course," when names were being given for invitation; and Forrest, of course was there. But Mrs. Bright was a good deal of a puzzle to the youthful mistress of the house. Every smile, every visit—almost every word—came from the good-looking, well-mannered, handsomely-dressed, and respectably-read Mrs. Bright, as a concession; Edith felt it, and her aunt felt it, but on no one did Lady Sarah smile more sweetly, more meaningly, than on Mrs. Bright: and so passed evening after evening, and Edith exerted herself, and was triumphant in her place. But the mornings were the seasons for rest. Then there was entertainment without effort, and all liked and understood each other. Mrs. Frank Thetford was delighted. She was

only ten years older than Edith, and they began to feel like sisters. She wandered over the old house; taught Edith heraldry; matched the coats of arms, by the pedigree, to the pictures; and all the stones spoke of those who had placed them there. "You have shown me a new part of the world, and taught me another language," said Edith—and so it was. At Mrs. Frank Thetford's suggestion, her father-in-law had brought with him some old letters, in which mention had been made of the Manor House in Catholic times. Who can tell Edith's delight?

"Let me show you something. You can enter into this, now—now that you are Catholics. See; a priest is spoken of—Father Francis,—who was hanged on Stangrove-hill, and buried in the old churchyard at Worrel."

"Was he ever here?" asks Edith, breathlessly.

"Yes, and has said mass many times in the chapel you have restored. I suppose he was one of the last, or the very last that did say mass here."

"Father Francis, pray for us," says Edith, under her breath, with her eyes full of tears.

"Father Francis, pray for us," says Mr. Thetford, aloud, and with a firm voice; and he lays his hand on Edith's head. "Thank God for those whom he has given back to Mother Church, for whom the martyr's blood has not been shed in vain." And Edith takes his hand and kisses it, for she cannot speak.

"And he was martyred on Stangrove-hill?" repeats Edith.

"Yes, he was seized at the old house. Some think—well, never mind—but the Stangrove of that day did not die as he might have done," said Mrs. Frank Thetford, with no small energy.

"And what followed?"

"Oh, he conformed, and grew dreadfully rich, and married the daughter of one as bad as himself; and so, from generation to generation, they have married, and grown rich. But there were echoes about the old house. They eat and drank in the chapel, and called it the banqueting-room, and carried on their revelry until the morning; but it would not do. From the far end, where the

mysteries of the faith have been so often celebrated, a whisper rose, and echoed through the room, and struck on their hearts."

"What was it?"

"'Judica me, Deus, et discerna causam meam de gente non sancta!' and then, horror-struck, they would disperse. So the room was given up first, and then the house. And then the present Stangrove was built, and the old house was given up to the farmer: and the vestments, in which Father Francis must have said mass, are those I would not let Mr. Stangrove show, when we met you at the Park."

And thus the days passed on, and the last day of that visit was over. Edith had kissed Mrs. Frank Thetford, with great affection. Her heart had indeed opened to receive another; to receive one who had done her good; one whom her father approved and her aunt loved; one who had given her more to think about; had made her, even as a Catholic, happier, and fonder of old times than ever. It was worth going out of the close circle of self, to meet such a friend as that. And what a history belongs to the body of old Catholics; such names, such pedigrees, such trials. The real representatives of the ancient greatness of the country. The romance of England.

Edith's heart dwelt upon it, and she spoke of it all to her aunt. Lady Sarah agreed with all her niece said, but still there was a *but*. "But it has not pleased God to place you in the midst of Catholic society. As you really do live, in the body, in the village—the *Protestant* village of Steeplehill—I hope you have not sent the whole of your heart away with Helen Thetford."

Edith's countenance fell.

"I congratulate you, however, on your agreeability to all guests, Edith."

"Only because I was in good spirits, I am afraid."

"I admired you very much," said Lady Sarah.

"Pray don't admire me. I do not feel that I deserve *your* admiration. I am growing to be rather amused at odd people. Did anyone ever see such absurd creatures as all those Flashers are. That dreadful duet, do you recollect it? And that poor Hester was really vastly pleased. And

there is so much mutual satisfaction. They enjoy for themselves and each other. It amuses me extremely."

"I was hoping that you would discern the amiability of those girls. You might raise their ideas, and be of immense benefit to them. They admire you so much."

"At a respectful distance, I hope," said Edith, with a shudder.

"I thought, that seeing as many people as we have seen lately, might ——" Lady Sarah hesitated.

"I am *alone*, just the same," said Edith. "There is one woman in the world besides yourself, Aunt Sarah, that is all."

"There is the whole Church militant here on earth," replied Lady Sarah, with a smile. Edith returned the smile. "And which is quite separate from the *Protestant* village of Steeplehill," she said.

"Oh, no, for the Church has the heathen for her inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for her possession," said Lady Sarah.

"Oh, aunt, aunt, you *will* have the last word; you set me a dreadfully bad example: and so you are kind, and courteous, and patient, and tender in judgment, and undying in hope——"

Lady Sarah tries to stop Edith's mouth, but Edith is very unruly, and *will* go on.

"And civil to the troublesome, and interested in the stupid; and you sing, and you talk, and you smile—I do really believe that you dress well and look beautiful, all because—because you are a Catholic, an *old* Catholic! Mysterious as you are, I believe in you, Aunt Sarah,—I believe in you with all my heart."

But Lady Sarah succeeded in silencing her niece at last, and she sent the young lady away.

A few more days passed by. In the bower of roses, which has been mentioned as now in fullest bloom, sat Edith. She laid her book down upon the seat by her side; she wrapped her muslin mantle round her, and her clear eyes sought the far bright sky. Then came a sound; she started up; she blushed the deepest crimson. A youth at her feet looked up at her for one moment, then turned

away his head, and poured forth a torrent of words to tell her how he loved her. Poor youth! it was Cavendish Trotman.

He had just got his commission. He had no hope, but he must speak; he cannot go till he has spoken; and now he has told it all. Quicker than a glance of the eye, fleet as a flash of lightning, a battle was fought in Edith's breast,—a battle fought and won,—a battle between the scorn that belongs to the world and the interior justice which says, she has brought this upon herself.

She stood still. She did not listen to the youth's words, though she knew their import; she was listening to her own soul.

When she spoke, justice had conquered. "Rise up; you must forget all this; I am going into the house. Good bye." She stood one instant more, but he never turned towards her; he stayed with his head leaning on the wooden bench, and did not speak. "Good bye," she said once more, and then walked quickly away.

The youth rose when she was gone, and he too walked home to the parsonage in the village.

His father met Cavendish at the door, and spoke.

"Well, my lad,"—then, "What! Cavendish!—something has happened! What's the matter?"

The boy threw himself on his father's breast, and poured forth his emotion. Mr. Trotman was extremely frightened. He called for his wife, who came promptly to his assistance.

"Heavens and earth!" said the lady.

"Here—what—bother—what am I saying? Cavendish, don't be a fool," said the father.

The youth impatiently flung himself from the repelling arms and words, and walked with a vexed air into the house, and into a sitting-room. His father followed him, quite angry; his mother, too, in vexed perplexity.

"I must insist," said the father.

"You really terrify me," began the mother.

"Don't be angry, sir. Don't be alarmed, mamma. I beg your pardons. But if you *must* know"—he crossed to the window with an affected strut—"if you *must* know,

I have fallen in love with Miss Mortimer, and five minutes ago I told her so, and got refused."

The boy's confiding heart went forth from Cavendish with those words, and never came back any more. His father's face flashed fire. His son looked at it with a careless smile.

"You young dog, what do you mean by coming here with a laugh on your face to declare your outrageous impertinence and folly?"

"You forget, sir," says Cavendish, coldly, "I am refused."

"But what am I to say if Sir Godfrey speaks to me about it,—just got pleasantly acquainted with them, too."

"I really did not think of that," said Cavendish, in a tone of mock apology.

"Well, you are going off to-morrow,—that's a blessing."

"It will be most agreeable to me," said Cavendish, and the subject seemed over—over—there were to be no more words about it; somebody had asked for bread, and had received a stone.

Edith had told it all to Lady Sarah.

"Yes," she said; "these things happen." But she pondered on it for some time, and lamented a thunder-storm that darkened the heavens, and then brightened them with awful light.

The thunder rolled, the rain poured, and Lady Sarah watched the dispersing clouds, and was seen, when it was once more calm and clear, to leave the house in a grey cloak and wonderful clogs, concealing a brown paper parcel beneath her wrappings, and supporting herself on an umbrella. There was a still inexplicable sort of bitterness in Mr. Trotman's house. Packing-up, the thought of the new life, the prospect of foreign service, the expectation of long farewells, and the strife of love and fear, with pride and a half-repentance, made the hours—the last precious hours—very bitter as they passed along. Mrs. Trotman said afterwards—for long afterwards, every thought and word of that evening was reproduced, and dwelt upon, and untiringly talked over—that the an-

nouncement of Lady Sarah Tregenna almost struck her senseless.

Lady Sarah entered the room where the mother and the son wasted their last hours in silence.

A gracious countenance, a step of unusual alacrity, a voice all music. "I should not venture to come at this moment without a very good reason. I see, Mrs. Trotman, that you know that my niece has told me——"

Mrs. Trotman had begun to declare that it was no fault of hers. Lady Sarah held Cavendish by the hand.

"I admire my niece so very much."

"Of course. I knew——" stammered Cavendish.

"Of course you knew your feelings would be respected, though not returned. You are not wrong in the trust put in us."

She placed her parcel on the table. It was impossible not to return her smile. Both mother and son smiled, and looked trustingly once more on each other. There was a jingling of spoons and saucers outside the door; it was tea.

"I must go. I must not intrude on a last evening; but I would not resist the desire to say 'Good bye' to you."

"Don't go," said Cavendish; "*see my father.*"

Lady Sarah understood it all in a moment.

Mr. Trotman came in. He saw that all was right, and was not awkward for more than a minute.

"I have brought an offering to the portmanteau," said Lady Sarah; "it is a dressing-case made for travelling uses."

She opened the parcel, and unlocked a leather case.

"It will want a change in the fitting-up for *you*. I must tell the truth; it really was bought for myself. If you will take it to the maker, it can be done easily; I have inclosed his direction here;" and she showed Cavendish a note in one of the pockets.

After a few more words with Mr. Trotman, Lady Sarah went away. When she was gone, Cavendish opened the note she had shown to him, and read its contents aloud, though with a hesitating voice. There were a few words



that made him feel that he would rather die than degrade himself in that excellent woman's eyes, that brought tears to his mother's, and made his father take him by the hand, and say :

"I was rough and unkind to you, Cavendish. I beg your pardon with all my heart."

There was something more in the envelope ; it was a cheque for a hundred pounds, of which the last paragraph in the note begged his acceptance so prettily,—but it lay beside them on the tea-tray untouched.

Lady Sarah had given them back what no money could have purchased, and they must enjoy it to the full. And even when Cavendish wrote to Lady Sarah that evening, he did not say much about the money, though he thanked her heartily ; but he said :

"I feel as if you had made a resolute man out of a selfish, hot-headed boy ; I will try to prove that you have done so."

And when, six weeks afterwards, Cavendish sailed for the Cape, it was to Lady Sarah that his mother poured forth her fears, her sorrows, and her hopes.

The circumstance vexed Edith very much. She did not know, what Lady Sarah knew, of the wretched irritation which her presence had dispersed on that last evening. But she was angry with herself ; and anger, being neither sorrow nor meekness, is both a troublesome and an unprofitable guest. Conscience did her duty. Justice was against Edith. But Edith only chafed, and said proud things to herself of the misfortune of knowing vulgar people, and of the *contretemps* likely to arise from such necessities. She *would not allow* Justice to be heard, or Conscience to show the circumstances clearly. She refused to listen when the interior mistress would remind her that she was so constant in the assertion of her superiority, and so satisfied when she saw that it was acknowledged and consented to, that the homage of young Cavendish had been received as her right, and had been more encouraged than repressed. Edith knew that she ought to listen ; but still she *would not*. Her aunt guessed the struggle—saw it, in little actions and glances and

tones of impatience. But she never spoke to Edith about Cavendish Trotman, or described that evening at the Parsonage. But Mrs. Trotman, in her simple motherly talk about Cavendish, had said things which had made Edith's heart shiver.

"It would have been so bad for the father and son to have parted unfriendly,—with any misunderstanding or disapproval,—and of course his father could not but feel vexed."—"And blessed are the peace-makers," said Mrs. Trotman again; "true Bible words, and true of her ladyship,—the Lord reward her."

And again Edith listened while the good lady, wiping her eyes, said: "And *would* be like an old friend—made such a pretty excuse of my poor old father having attended her at the Manor in the measles. It seemed like doing her a favour when Cavendish took her farewell present—a hundred pounds!—and I know it gave her pleasure."

And so Edith learnt of a home disturbed for her sake, and of reconciliations in which she had had no part.

After this Angus Macdonnell came.

"He is really very pleasant," said Edith, one day.

"Pleasant! of course,—why not? All gentlemen are pleasant in their different ways."

"But I never thought that I should like Angus."

"Because you thought of the possessors of Menadarva as if they were the dragons in a fairy tale. He is pleasant, and handsome, and gentlemanly, and so was his father."

Angus thought Lady Sarah far less of a dragon than he had fancied she would be. There was no restraint upon Edith. Long summer-days passed, and she was with her father and Angus for hours together. It was all happiness. Happiness clear, bright, still, warm, unchanging.

Edith felt and enjoyed *power*; the roots of her heart were striking very deep into the earth. Silently, but not slowly, she was rooting herself there, and holding up her fair head gracefully; giving gladness with a smile, and with a few words making many happy. Already at her young age she was looked up to, and all the world admired her.

She is the queen of all the neighbourhood ; she is the most charmingly independent little creature that ever ruled with a smile and upset the best-laid plans with a shake of the head.

And so the summer wore on ; and Angus went, and came again ; and in his second visit, said to Captain Forrest that it was all going right ; but Captain Forrest said, "Never."

A few days after Angus's departure for the second time, he wrote to Edith and told her what he wished.

Walking backwards and forwards from the bee-hives to the summer-house, Edith read the letter a great many times, and she let her imagination play with it. Once more she was at Menadarva, not as a child, but as a woman, and its mistress. She had learnt something of the pleasures of position and power ; she could dwell with satisfaction on Angus's appearance and agreeability, and she knew that she could guide him with a look. So she walked up and down, and read parts of the letter again and again, and let her imagination play.

The letter was not to be answered for four days, when Angus would be at Menadarva. He had written from London. So, after a long time, Edith walked slowly into the house, and appeared at dinner quite tranquil and self-possessed.

It was not that, for one moment, she thought of marrying Angus. But she had so often allowed herself to dream, and she had grown so fond of power. She had, by her manner and ways demanded so much, and, being really attractive, she had received so much, that self had grown of more consequence than she knew of. So she dangerously let her imagination play with what she might be—what one single word from those smiling lips would make her. With what riches and power one effort of her will might endow her ! She never really mixed up right and wrong in her mind. She never plainly said to herself : "Shall I marry a man not a Catholic, and for whom I have no love, or even reverence, or great respect ?" The proposal had nothing in it to tempt her for a moment. But it pleased her self-love to contemplate how much

she had in her power. And so she let her imagination play.

The evening came. Edith worked and thought. Playfully to herself she said, "Menadarva is not his yet! What agonies one might make his father suffer!"

She has hardly given a smile to the thought, when Sir Godfrey exclaims, "Poor man!"

The evening post has brought a letter from Angus, and his father is dead.

Sir Godfrey gave Edith the letter; it contained a few words about his love for her, and his hopes that now she would answer him speedily.

Edith's only answer was to give the letter she had that morning received from Angus, to her father. But she trembled, and her father turned pale.

"I will answer it to-night—now. Aunt Sarah, will you pour out tea? I will go to my room."

"Good night, then, dear child," said Sir Godfrey; "but—but—Edith, what answer?"

"Oh, papa!" and she nestled within his arm, and looked up, with a radiant countenance, to his still pale face; "oh, papa, what is there *there* which could attract me from *this* house; from you, from our new friends, from our beloved old chapel? I like Angus very much, but he is a Protestant. The answer is 'No!'"

Sir Godfrey kissed her very quietly, dropped the arm slowly that was round her, and watched her from the room.

Once in that luxurious little corner of the house, her own room, Edith dropped into her accustomed chair, wheeled round the writing-table, and then leant back, and still enjoyed her power.

She had ten thousand times more at her command than she had had an hour before. Her father had once renounced the world of wealth, and now she could approve his choice by her own confirmation of it. So, with a bright eye and a warm cheek, she writes; and then Lady Sarah walks in, and says:

"Edith, you are going to refuse him?"

"Oh yes, of course I am."

"May I ask when you received that letter?"

"This morning."

"You did not tell me."

"No; I have been silly and dreamy, and fancying how fine it might be to go back to our old magnificence, and manage it all, if—"

"If what?"

Lady Sarah stood behind Edith, and laid her hand on her shoulder. Edith hung down a blushing face, and said:

"If—if—if we had no souls, I suppose, aunt; or if Menadarva was heaven. I did not say I had been wise, and reasoning, Aunt Sarah."

"I thought that as you had not spoken to me, there might have been some other thought in your mind. But, Edith, you *must* think and reason now. You must write your answer with full knowledge of facts. Your father—"

At that name, the best beloved in all the world, Edith's heart jumps.

"Your father is going to be married."

It was very good of Lady Sarah to get behind Edith. Back ran the blood to the fountain of life.

"He has proposed to Mrs. Frank Thetford, and she has accepted him."

Edith felt as if her flesh were dead, and her heart endowed with a new and most acute sense of life. All new—everything had become new in that single moment; everything lost once more, and now she alone the sufferer.

Oh Edith, proud of her loneliness once, despising the common thoughts of the common lives of common men,—where is she now? All things connected with the great fact she had placed before her pass through her mind like a long procession. Her aunt is speaking, and speaking in that tone and manner which means she *ought* to listen; and she bows her head and hears it all.

They will not marry till the two years have expired, from her mother's death. "Yes," Edith says to each fact as she takes it in. Her father would not have spoken of it so soon but for this proposal of Angus Macdonnell's.

She ought to know *all* previous to writing. "Yes." There is only an entailed property belonging to Sir Godfrey; Mrs. Frank Thetford is an heiress, but that can make no difference to Edith; if Sir Godfrey has a son, Edith will be penniless. "Yes," she answers, in the same dead way. But Sir Godfrey has determined to insure his life; not for a large sum, that would make him a pensioner on his wife,—for a sum which will produce at his death about a hundred a year to his daughter. He will allow her that sum when she marries; in the mean time things will go on as usual, she will have her fifty pounds a year for dress and pocket-money.

What talk this was for a bursting heart. There is to be another mistress of the house, another companion for her father, another who will dare to love Mortimer Manor as if it were her own. And they talk to her of life-insurance and fifty pounds a year. She is never to be first any more; she is to stand aside, and her father and another are to tread life's path together, and in her sight; and that other will have no association with the past—with *her* past. *She* will never know what her father has left, or who loved, and honoured, and lamented him. She will never know how he nursed the sick, and buried the dead, and fondled her in his heart till she never thought of that heart ever loving any one else. *She* will come with her own thoughts, and fill the house with her possessions, and wear his name; and he will love her children,—devote himself to a son, perhaps.

Edith rose up, put her hands to her eyes, as if to shut those pictures out, and cried, "Oh aunt, oh aunt! what has happened? Where am I?"

But all that Lady Sarah said was, "I will leave you now, and come back; you want to write your letter."

And she moved towards the door; but a piteous voice followed her:

"Oh tell my heart how it ought to feel; help it,—it can't be good as it ought to be."

And still Edith stood, with her head bowed, resting on her hands.

Lady Sarah came back. "The merciful Giver of

Good has blessed your father with a great possession—the heart of an excellent woman. The house of Mortimer, Edith, will receive one well worthy of its name, and probably will be continued in the place assigned to it, by this desirable marriage. I think we had better thank God."

Now Edith put her hand within her aunt's, and laid her head on her shoulder.

"But I—I— what am I to do? Oh, I am so weak; and oh, aunt, the waving trees at Menadarva show such an inviting shade; and I am not wanted *here*, and *there* I am longed for. I cannot live without my own world, and *this* is not mine any more."

"You need not answer that letter to-night. Come and see your father."

Lady Sarah led her away.

Edith's face brightened when she met her father's anxious glance.

"Dearest child, my darling, tell me what you think?"

"That you have chosen my own particular friend, papa."

"Thank you, thank you, Edith."

And in his voice, and look, and nervous embrace, Edith saw and felt how he loved Helen Thetford.



## CHAPTER XI.

## HARD TRUTHS.

EDITH was asleep—sleeping sound and still—the sleep of the strong-willed who *choose* to rest, and are *determined* to put off thought till the morrow. When she had come into her room, she had given one glance to the locked-up desk. There lay her life. She knew it. Everything there was just as she had left it. And it might wait. In another part of that room, which knew so much of the thoughts that were her happiness, was the little French bed, all ready; holy water by the side; the Crucifix overhead; and opposite on a bracket, the fair statue of Her who by the side of Him who keepeth Israel, stands crowned, and keeps perpetual watch. Edith entered that room, quiet and sternly still. All around was night-like. The lamp burned steadily in its small silver vessel, and gave forth its little light. She hastily put out her candle—that other light was enough. She knelt down for one moment, only one moment at the kneeling-stool in the corner. She said—not a prayer—these words—“All is changed. Three hours have changed the world. I cannot think, or even pray, yet he seemed to pray in the chapel, just now. To-morrow I will try to do something. But now—I don’t know where I am.” Dark night passed, and day and life began again. Edith was roused from sleep by a bell—the chapel bell—a bell that only rang when there was mass. A knock came to the door, followed by Lady Sarah’s voice. “Father Maynard is here. As soon as we are ready there will be mass.” Edith’s heart felt breaking, but she thanked her, in a cheerful voice. She was *determined* to be cheerful. But her heart wore its disguise painfully. The bell rang on,



and the chains round her spirit loosened. Poor girl—she lifted up her hands, and said, “At least THOU knowest all. Whether I am behaving ill or well—*Thou knowest*. I have comfort in that. I cannot stop to find myself out now. But forget me not, O Lord.” And then as she hurried in her toilette, and as still the last notes vibrated on her ear, she hung her head in a better spirit—“Domine, non sum dignus—Domine, non sum dignus.” ’Twas a sorrowful sight. She went to the lower hall, and entered the chapel by the public door. Her aunt was kneeling near the altar, and she went to the opposite side.

Something whispers, “Go to Father Maynard.” But she stays where she is, like one rooted to the floor.

A great strife arises. She makes no effort. She lets her spirit be beaten about one way and the other, till she scarcely knows where she is!

Once there came a thought to her heart—“Oh, Edith; you, who have liked to influence all around you—to rule your little world—where lies the use of strength of mind, and power of will, if you cannot rule your own soul; if you let your spirit run to wreck in this manner?” But still she made no effort.

Her thoughts go forth on the waves of the turbulent world. She listens to the roaring wind, she contemplates the threatening billows, she shrinks before the rising storm, and she is sinking fast. Oh, if great Saint Peter was perishing when he ventured to look around, what mortal shall dare to walk life’s treacherous sea, with eyes averted from his Master’s face?

But mass has begun. And now comes the great miracle of power and grace. Then the prayers for the dead. Then communion. Edith looks up. Her aunt, old Martha, Captain Forrest, Kate Dawson, and Frank, kneel at the altar-rail—for a time she forgets herself, and makes thanksgiving. But how all ends, she hardly knows. The chapel grows empty, and then she rises up.

Close to the door, she comes on Kate.

“Oh, Kate, I am very glad. But I did not know that you were ready for this.”

The beautiful face of the village girl brightened into

majesty. "Captain Forrest finished the teaching of Frank, and you taught me," she says.

"How, how?" asks Edith, hurriedly. "I did not know that Captain Forrest was a Catholic."

"Few people did," said Kate. "His aunt is a particular lady, and she was angry when he wrote and said he was a Catholic. When he got his hand disabled, she said he should come to her, if he would keep his change secret for a year; hoping to get him back, I expect," said Kate. "They have no relations in the world, but themselves," she adds sighing.

"Tell me how he came to teach Frank?" says Edith.

"Oh, that happened this way—Captain Forrest used to go to mass at Worrel; there he saw Frank. And he found that after work Frank used to walk that five miles, three times a week, for instruction. So he got leave from Mrs. Bright to teach Frank himself, and so he did. Frank has received holy communion three times, and this is my first!" And Kate crossed herself, and wiped her eyes. And Edith took the girl by the hand and thanked God.

"Tell me about yourself?"

"Oh, Miss Mortimer, though I was a ragged, starving girl, six months ago, I was the proudest of the proud. I was angry, because we were poor. I was full of hatred, and contempt of others, because I was worse off in this world's goods than I had once been. I would not learn, even the little that poor mother would have taught me. I would have my own way. And I would trample everything under my feet. Then somebody told me, that you and Sir Godfrey had given up tens of thousands in money and land, to become what I was born to. And they said you were very poor, to what you had been. And then the beautiful carriage was sent away, the fine horses I used to run out to look at were sold. And fewer servants were kept, and the chapel was made so beautiful, and mass said here, and charity to the poor, and prayers for my mother, and tears for me, and on your own beautiful face never one look of regret, and you walked about the village like an angel among us."

"Oh, Kate, Kate!"

"And Sir Godfrey, the grandest gentleman that Steeplehill ever saw, as humble as a child, and I could not bear the reproach. So I have learnt my religion, and I have made my first communion to-day. And I have asked for every blessing of Heaven and earth upon Sir Godfrey, for I owe it all to his coming to Steeplehill." Then giving Edith a glowing look of gladness, the girl walked away.

And Edith stood at the door of the chapel, and gave one parting glance within, and said, "Oh, that I could be simple-minded like the poor. Oh, that to do and to be, were as easy as to think and to talk." And the breakfast-bell rang, and she moved swiftly away. "I will have a long talk with Father Maynard after breakfast," she said to herself, as she walked up stairs.

She entered the breakfast-room full of thought, and a little softened, and in her heart Kate's words—"I have prayed for every blessing of Heaven and earth upon Sir Godfrey." Perhaps, it was coming true—that prayer. And she walked softly, for she was the sacrifice.

But within that room were joyous hearts, and glad voices rang around it, and she felt it was bright with smiles. Sir Godfrey was bidding Captain Forrest praise him, because he had kept the secret so well—this wonderful secret between the aunt and the nephew. Mrs. Bright had thought it honourable to tell Lady Sarah, and she had desired her to tell her brother; and they turned to Edith, and she was obliged to congratulate, and to show pleasure, and interest, and to speak of hope and happiness for others, while her own heart felt as dry as a dead fire's ashes. But the will was strong, and she was determined to seem to do it well. Her father admired and loved her, and Edith read how it was in the tender glances that gleamed upon her.

"Yes; this is the way," she said to herself. And never was there a more perfect picture of gracious pleasantness and smiling self-possession.

As they were leaving the room, her father said to her, softly, "Father Maynard knows *all*, you need not feel any restraint with him." She answered him with a radiant

smile. But she did not seek Father Maynard. She sat with her work in the morning-room. He came in. They were alone. Edith knew that something ought to be said, so she asked if he did not feel very happy at the prospect that was opening before Sir Godfrey?

"Yes," he said. It was a very firm "yes." And Edith gave involuntarily a very little shudder.

He sat down by her side. "It brings its trials to you," he said.

"Its surprise," answered Edith. "Unexpected things have to be got over always."

"Do you not know," he said, gently, "that to wear a mask to me is hurting yourself?"

"How do you know I wear a mask?"

"Because I am acquainted with the natural face," he answered.

"I think the original face, by long use, grows into something else, and then *that* is the natural face," said Edith.

"Are you not pleased about Kate Dawson?" said Father Maynard. Edith's heart went cold. He would not have her insincerity.

"Oh, yes." She was very much pleased. She wished that Kate could be helped on in the world.

"The world goes hard with Kate," said Father Maynard. "Captain Forrest has engaged Frank as a servant; so his weekly earnings are lost for the family food; and the three children having to be supported by Kate, makes her work at needlework at home, after factory hours; and her heart is troubled by Mr. Carter, Sir Marmaduke's great man, wishing to marry her."

"Mr. Carter! oh, I remember," exclaimed Edith. "He lives at the red-house, going up the hill. He is really a great man, and he wishes to marry Kate?"

"Oh, yes; and even Lady Mercer, who, I think, is sorry for the trouble brought on the Dawsons by Sir Marmaduke pursuing that poaching affair so obstinately. She has interested herself very much about Kate. And Mr. Carter is full of the fairest promises—and all this harasses Kate, because she is obliged to meet Carter constantly, or

lose bread for the children and herself, and so a thousand little difficulties arise, and only great simplicity and courage will carry Kate through all her trials, I fear."

Edith made up her mind to put a possible case. "She might marry Mr. Carter; surely it would do good to all, if she married him."

"It would be a trial of her own faith, a certain embarrassment to her soul; and the greatest impediment that one can imagine to her advancement in holiness, and undoubtedly it would risk the souls of the children. Suppose her dead, and Carter married again; of course the children would be brought up Protestants. A poor return for all that God has done for her."

"And you desire her not to marry Mr. Carter?"

"She does not want advice. She never, for one moment, thought of marrying him."

"How odd," said Edith, languidly.

"How good a beginning of the battle of life, within the citadel of the Church," said Father Maynard.

Edith got up, and went to the window. "I have a great mind to tell about Angus," spoke her heart, secretly. But, pride answered, "If you do, you will be obliged to take his advice." "I know that, already," said the judgment that wouldn't be guided; and so that opportunity passed away. Half an hour afterwards, she was asking for Father Maynard, but he was gone. She wandered, ghost-like, through the day. The light that had made things glow to her eye, and had awakened that delicious feeling of possession as if her own name had weaved itself imperishably with everything about her, was gone. Of course her observing aunt saw how it was, but not a word did she say. Her father was out all day. When he came home to them, at the six o'clock dinner, he found his daughter waiting his arrival, with pleasant smiles and easy words.

What a lovely day it has been. Have you been as far as Worrel? Oh, you drove Father Maynard. I hope Fairy behaved well. How docile that pony is. Clever Mr. Norman prophesied truly. I have not been out; I had some in-door occupations to-day.

And so the dinner passed, and the evening, and Sir

Godfrey did not know how desolate his daughter felt. But when night came again, Edith's spirits flagged.

"Good night," she said to her aunt, and stopped at her bedroom-door.

"Come in, Edith."

"No, I am tired."

"You had better come."

"Too tired, aunt."

Lady Sarah takes her arm. "No more separation. Our hearts have been apart all day."

"On one condition I will come," says Edith.

"Well?"

"That you will be *cruel* to me. I cannot bear kindness to-night. No one can, by any possibility, sympathize with me; to pretend to do so, would make me feel quite wild. But if you can be *cruel*, I can bear that. Terrible honesty would do me good. The keen judgment that could tell me where I am; the sharp sword that would lay open my heart, to itself; *that* I could bear—nothing else."

"I can tell you where you are." And Lady Sarah led her niece into the room, and placed her in a low easy-chair, by the side of a table where her writing-case lay, and some books; and then she seated herself just opposite. "I can tell you where you are."

Edith leaned her head on her hand, and rested her arm on the table.

"You have wandered into that land of doubt and difficulty, which is peopled by the proud; into that world of weakness and woe, where dwell the worshippers of their own will; into that clime of cloud and mist, where the light of the countenance of the eternal I AM is obscured."

Edith looked up. "I have had a great trial," she said, coldly. "I love my father too much to show it. I am forced into hypocrisy."

"You expect the whole world to move aside for you to pass. It can't be so; and your life is one grand failure."

"A failure!" Edith speaks indignantly. "Is the relinquishment of power, position, riches, friends, the whole world, a failure?"

"You have not relinquished them. Your father did.

You have lived in his love, and nothing else. You came here; and you, personally, have been greater here than you would have been at Menadarva, and had your father remained a Protestant; you came to a place which was the centre of a world—a little one, perhaps, but large enough for you to manage and to influence. And what have you done?—nothing: worse than nothing. The chief event has been,—the ridiculous declaration of love, from a poor Protestant boy, the grandson of a village apothecary."

"Thank you," said Edith. "It smarts almost enough, I think. You seem to know what cruelty is very well, Aunt Sarah."

"Is it not hard truth, Edith?"

"Yes, it is. But I could not have helped what has happened."

"You could not, I believe; but others would."

"Would they? How? Who?" says Edith.

"Helen Thetford," answered Lady Sarah.

"Would she? Tell me all about it."

"Ah! my dear child, that would be a long story."

"But I must have it," said Edith, with ardour. "Only first, as I know you did not merely speak to rouse me — about that silly affair. I thought you patronized the poor youth. You certainly contrived to do the oddest thing in the world,—you gave him money!"

"I was sorry for his folly. I was sorry for the vexation of his parents. I was sorry for last hours ill-spent. I was sorry to see you dazzle the ignorant youth's eyes, by your stately ways and proud doings. I was vexed to see him drawn, day by day, into the attraction; and I was mortified to think, that you, a Mortimer—Edith, don't smile. I mean what I say. That *you* should be subjected to what, in a worldly point of view, was a degradation. You behaved well enough when the folly came; sincerity is always respectable, and you had brought the annoyance of its exhibition on yourself. I felt that something ought to be done. Where would have been the use of coolness towards the parents? but your superior position in life had to be vindicated. So I saw him, made him feel that he had committed himself; made him thankful that he had

committed himself to honourable people, and took advantage of my position, as rich, of high rank, and of a certain age, to lay him under an obligation. I put him back in his place, Edith; which was very good for him and for you: and he, and all his family have felt it so. But, my dear child, it was an atrocity,—such a thing happening to you.”

“How came it to be my fault? Strike very hard, let the truth fall heavy and hard,—it does me good.”

“You have walked your life here, with a ring and a clatter, which has attracted the attention of the crowd, and even the talk of the whole neighbourhood—the admiring talk, Edith; for you have been a great heroine in your little world. Every word, every movement has said, ‘I am more refined, more intellectual, better born, than you who are around me.’ Your talents, your accomplishments, your *beauty*, Edith,—for we are talking truth,—the romance of your situation, the reflection of your father’s excellence, all helped to heighten the effect of your pride; and people have been dazzled and charmed, when they ought to have been benefited and blessed; and one poor bewildered boy rushed in, and told how crazed he felt; and being a Christian, you had patience; and I, being a sort of old fairy god-mother, and by a mercy, having been cured at nine years old, when here with your grandfather, of something—croup or scarlet fever——”

“It was measles,” said Edith, with a laugh, which was almost a cry.

“Well, whatever it was, poor Mrs. Trotman has told it a dozen times over, with all imaginable particulars; having, early in life, formed a connection with the honest family I made up their own quarrels, and did what I suppose ‘Aunt Sarah’ had a right to do.”

A spot of warm Welsh blood blushed upon her cheek; after a moment, she spoke again.

“But these things can’t be done twice, Edith; characters and circumstances favoured me this once. But there is a great danger in this hard life of ours.”

“Tell me the danger.”

“The danger lies in your growing to like the degradation



which comes with declarations of love from undesirable persons. People who have drawn upon themselves the empty admiration of the crowd, learn to like it,—to require it, at last ; even to desire and labour for it, and then——”

“Vulgar, empty-hearted, detestable ! No, no ! Oh, no ; never, never, Aunt Sarah, should I be that.”

“My dear Edith, if Steeplehill had contained half a dozen young Trotmans, why should they not all have done the same ?”

“It would have cost you six hundred pounds,” said Edith, determined to laugh when she could not argue.

“No. It would have saved me that one, and you would have lost your self-respect for ever, I should think.”

“It comes,” said Edith, hastily, “of knowing vulgar people ; I have always felt it.”

“It comes,” said Lady Sarah, “of your own empty display of superiority, which dazzles the ignorant, and makes the good hesitate and fear for you.”

“I don’t know what you mean by emptiness.”

“Do you know what people mean, when they speak of Eleanor Mercer’s beauty, as a meaningless, empty, worthless thing ?”

“Yes, I do.”

“And the spirit within you, Edith, is as powerless as her face ;—it dazzles, it attracts gazers, it draws people on to talk of it freely ; it is its own snare.”

“You look into my heart, Aunt Sarah. It is its own snare. But how—oh ! how can I help it ?”

“At this very moment,” said Lady Sarah, “you would escape humiliation, by any means, —any means, Edith, short of sin. The trial of your father’s marriage lies in its interfering with that consequence which you love, and insist upon. You will have to stand a little aside ; a little in the shade ; a little out of that broad sunlight which you have courted with an open face ; and your temptation is to step aside to another path, a path of danger to your soul, of almost certain interior misery, because there you can still occupy a first, a marked, a conspicuous place—the place of the proud !”

“It stings, it stings,” cried Edith ; “but every stroke

does me good. My heart is so full and so hot, that every word of sharpness from your lips seems to ease it. We shall never talk freely again, Aunt Sarah. We shall never, no, never again talk in this way; say all, say anything you will to me, for I should like to hear it all."

"Then I will say, that your only misfortune has been this—the absence of Catholic childhood. This is the secret of your sorrows. The trials of the woman have begun, and the lessons of childhood are not yet learned. The spirit of the Church is the spirit of sacrifice; without that, everything is worthless and empty. From the earliest moments of knowledge, the Catholic child is taught to know and to love the accents of the still small voice, which says every hour, 'Suffer for my sake.' Secret habits of self-forgetfulness spring up; impulses to love and benefit come like a second nature. Born of God's grace, they are the fruits of an expansive power of the soul which exists because of His love, Whose Sacred Heart took in the whole world, and poured forth the treasure of the precious Blood for every sinner in it. And so, as self is forgotten in this great universal charity, there flows forth to all around—not, Edith, *not* the words of this world which challenge attention, and the ways that attract remark,—*not* the familiarity which, for a vulgar relaxation, destroys the boundaries Almighty Providence has permitted in society,—*not* what you have a horror of, Edith; but the ten thousand habitual exquisite gentlenesses which are blessings where they fall; which belong to the Catholic to bestow, for they are the Catholic's inheritance; which no one out of the Church ever possessed, for it is the sweetness of the Divine Sacramental strength, coming out in little things."

"Little things," repeated Edith, and gazed up into her aunt's earnest face. She began to see that what she admired so much in that dear relative, was the forgetfulness of self and the spirit of sacrifice. And again she said—"Little things!"

"Yes, Edith, for life is made up of little things. And, Edith, purple and fine-linen clad women, in the quiet paths of life, in the bosom of the Church, weave crowns out of

little things, and no one knows anything about it perhaps, or ever will know, until that awful day, when before Omniscient Justice, the last shall be first, and the first, last."

"Go on, say something more. I tell you again, that we shall never speak in this way any more; go on,—do speak again, Aunt Sarah."

"There is but little more to say," said Lady Sarah. "There will be less of sound from the soul filled with charity. It will attract far less the gaze, wonder, and admiration of idlers standing by; but the flow of its sweetness will be reverentially accepted. Silent tongues, but thankful hearts; loving respect, and willing service will be with its worshippers: and what people admire, they love, and what they love, they imitate; and so, silent changes work; and He who sees in secret, counts the good, and reckons up the reward, till the great day when its deeds will come on the soul with surprise—'Lord, when?' Beware, Edith, of using the living world around you as you *have* used it. As if those souls were made for *you*,—for you to amuse yourself with, probing their depth, trying their strength, measuring their powers, and dismissing them, when you have tried your own skill sufficiently. The world is not yours; or yours only as the place of your own trial, and they will one day be your judges. There is only one way of being great. It is by sacrifice."

"I have never learnt it," said Edith.

"No," said Lady Sarah. "Your own friends could not teach you. Now, omnipotent wisdom Himself teaches you. All this day you have lived in the burning atmosphere of unyielding pride; your smiles, your kind words, even your childlike kisses on your father's hand, Edith, were all unnatural, unreal; the result of a hard pride—that would suffer alone; whose will it was to deceive. Oh, give it up. Weep, dear child, speak out your sorrow; only try, all the time, to suffer *well*; to bring your heart into loving obedience. You will soon find how free it is to serve God. How much happier it is to take all he sends with thankfulness, than it is to shut yourself up in the desert of a burning heart, where there is suffering without any reward."

Edith was gazing on her aunt like one who scarcely heard a word.

"Tell me something about Helen Thetford. Tell me all you can think of about her; it will do my hot heart good to know holy things of her, who will be with him—with papa, when—— Aunt Sarah, look at me!"

Aunt Sarah did look. She saw such a worn face, such a haggard countenance.

"Oh, my child, I have said too much. I have made you unhappy."

"No, aunt, stop—stop, and hear me finish what I was saying. I was asking to hear more of her, who will be with him, *when I am gone.*"

"You?"

"Yes—you are right. Every word has sunk into my heart. But the world in which I may prove them is not here. I wrote at mid-day to Angus, and I said 'yes,' Aunt Sarah."

Lady Sarah sprang from her seat, and stood for one moment, then sat down again.

"You promised to marry Angus Macdonnel?"

"Yes."

"Do you love him?"

"You know, aunt, I—I—I am going to love him—I love him well enough to trust my happiness to his care."

"And the waving trees at Menadarva cast an inviting shade," said Lady Sarah, with a sad sort of smile, as if she would make the best of the thing that was done, and with her eyes full of tears.

"They did yesterday," said Edith, slowly; "but to-day it has changed; and the shade is dark and chilly, and so lonely; oh, so lonely—it looks like the grave of the friendless. But all you have said is true; so very true; only this terrible night of hard truths has come too late, Aunt Sarah."

"Then God forgive me—forgive me. A hundred times I have thought that I would stop you, and say this is not truth—this is the play of a poor pride; but it was all so fair, and so captivating, that I gave in to the poor folly. But this——"

"Oh, stop. Not a word against it. Papa knows by this time. I sent a note to his dressing-room. I could never let him know that——"

"Oh, Edith, it is pride in another shape."

"Aunt," said Edith, gravely. "God was willing to teach me submission in a very gentle way—it was only to stand aside, and see my dear father happy. I would not have it. A choice was offered me. I took my own way. I shall learn one day, that the cross God sends, is the one that best fits the shoulders. But I have made my choice, and I must keep to it now. Good night."

She rose slowly, and giving her aunt a kiss, pressed her hand lovingly, and walked away.

Again alone, and in the silent world. Its peace only broken by the faint ticking of the little clock, or the whirling sound of some night-insect in its flight, as it turned aside from the open window which the drawn-down blind protected. The air was fragrant—all was peace—all but the heart that Edith brought there. But though she looked so wretched, she was happier than when that evening she had shone in smiles. She thought the day over. "If, only last night, I had accused my proud heart of its sins before God—for I knew I was wrong! If, only this morning, I had gone to the confessional, and held up my heart, as an open book! If, afterwards, when my father told me to have no restraint, I had only been sincere! If, as I walked through the house, when it was too late to speak, and communed with the things I love so well, I had only read the lessons they teach me now!"

Then, bewildered, she cried out, she cried out sadly—"But what use is there in self-reproach? Self-reproach should bring repentance, and repentance amendment. I musn't repent. I can't amend. What have I done? I can only pray that God will give me grace to bear the cross I have carved out, and save my soul in spite of myself." And she sat down weeping, and said, "My great enemy is myself. There is a judgment quite different to the world's judgment, and I am guilty in Thy sight. I have been like the sounding-brass, and the

tinkling symbol. I am quite unworthy of the ancestry I have loved so much, for they were men of deeds, and I am a thing of show and idle words. I have been jealous of my place, and my dignity; and forgetful of the child-like spirit which God loves, and which would have felt it had much to learn. And now I am going to possess all that I have seemed most to value—a proud place in the world. I have never drunk from the fountain of love for others; and now I am going where it will be a sealed fountain to all but myself. I have chosen to stand alone and apart; my choice is my condemnation. I have done it all myself. I must suffer it all myself. There is no escape. Oh, life feels long and the old home looks lonely." Then, standing up, she said, "I have done one good thing. Once, when I was really sorry for Kate Dawson; once, when I was not proud. And what my aunt said that day was true. We must work; we can't help working; everything we do has a result—produces an effect somewhere. But is it so with everybody? or is it only so with *us*, with *me*?"

She went to the window to shut it; she looked out for a moment; she could see a light, a very little light in the dusk; it was from a cottage window. She knew Kate Dawson sat up and toiled for bread; she knew that that girl could marry any day into a place which was much more than Menadarva was to her; but she would not put any impediment in the way of her soul; she would not risk harm to the souls of the little ones sleeping round her. Father Maynard's words came back—"It will require courage and simplicity." "I have shown neither the one nor the other," said Edith. "But Kate prays for me; and Kate will be heard. Some time, and in some way, I shall know, perhaps hereafter, that Kate has been heard."

The next morning's interview with Sir Godfrey was a heavy trial. Edith did not attempt to deceive; but she was so firm and calm, that her father had no idea of the truth. He thought within himself how very strong the association with the past must be; he thought how nobly she had behaved in stifling the great regret she must have

felt ; he consoled himself with thinking of her extraordinary strength of mind, and the influence she might have upon Angus. And then he wondered whether, by this marriage, the true faith was to be planted at Menadarva ; whether his child was to accomplish what he had not been allowed to attempt. And so, a little disquieted, and a good deal surprised, he mingled prayer and trust with fear and some anxiety, and wrote himself to Angus to tell him to come, and talk to him the following week.

"My dear Edith," said Sir Godfrey, "I am very sorry we are to have friends here the day after to-morrow. You would rather be alone, I am sure ? I will send to Lord Reinecourt, and to Stangrove, and put them off—events will explain for us by-and-by ; shall I do so, my dear child ?"

"Oh, no!" Edith answered. "Indeed, I would rather not. I can't help feeling a little—a little frightened—I suppose, papa. It is a—a——"

Edith can't get on. But it is clear that their friends must come,—and so they do come. Lord and Lady Reinecourt and their son Dudley, and their daughter Olivia, and Mr. Stangrove.

They came rather early, and walked about ; and Edith, though she had that morning expected a letter from Angus that had not arrived, was quiet and self-possessed, and "behaved herself," as Martha always said when she wished to praise her much-admired young mistress.

The time for dressing came, and when Edith reappeared in the drawing-room it was empty. The large mirror reflected her, as she stood like one of "Troy's proud dames whose garments sweep the ground." The dress was faintest pink, mingled with palest dove. It blushed as she moved. Her beautiful hair, folded like a Grecian statue's, had ivy leaves wreathed among it. The door opens, and she looks towards it—she has just heard a carriage drive up, and she expects to see Lady Mercer—but Angus enters quickly, and is at her side, and is thanking her a thousand times.

She tries to move—to speak ; but his towering beauty, his manner, his *will*, which is even stronger than her own,

all assert themselves. She feels crushed down, trodden under, captive. The sound of rushing waters is in her ears, and he is clasping round the wrist he holds, with painful firmness, a bracelet of diamonds and emeralds—when a voice comes——

“Stop, Mr. Macdonnel. You have not seen Sir Godfrey.”

“No, Lady Sarah. Forgive me; but I am not going to yield now. I know you are sorry.”

“Nonsense!” she says, impetuously. “The house is full of people. To-morrow will be soon enough for this.”

She unclasps the bracelet, and lays it on its satin cushion within the leather case. The door opens again—Sir Marmaduke and Lady Mercer! Lady Sarah holds the case towards Angus, and Edith moves forward. Again she says “*to-morrow*.” He cannot but take it, and “*to-morrow*” echoes Edith’s heart—“*to-morrow!*”

And the Mercers are very glad to see Angus, and he begins to talk. And other people come in, and the waters of life are quite calm again. So calm, so smooth, so softly brilliant. Each one there has launched his bark, and manages the little craft with equal skill. Who thinks of the shipwrecks below? No one but Lady Sarah, who never forgets for one moment the dangers of that night; and is always on the watch—always acting for the future; and with the most perfect self-command contrives that Angus and Edith shall never be together, so that he has no opportunity of acting the lover in any way. Angus thought he was going to sing in a trio with Capt. Forrest and Edith; but Lady Sarah, who was supposed to be only playing the accompaniment, is singing the treble also. Then he asks for a song which Edith had sung at Stangrove; and no difficulty is made. The song is placed, Lady Sarah plays the accompaniment again; but Eleanor Mercer is singing, and Edith is showing prints to Lady Reinecourt. Oh! what a woman of the world Lady Sarah was that night.

‡ The next morning came, and promised an unclouded day. There was walking and pleasant talk, and luncheon.



And then the carriages drove round, and the guests went away.

Angus and Sir Godfrey were to go out on horseback for a short time. Edith watched them mount, and then turned away, for "*to-morrow*" was come.

In an hour they would be back. She remained for a time in thought. She must get strength. She almost ran to the chapel. She could hardly speak. But there she could kneel, and her heart would pray.

Before she knelt the sacristy door opened, and she saw—she stood still in her great surprise—she saw Helen Thetford come out. She immediately beckoned to Edith, and went back again to the room she was leaving. Edith was by her side in a moment.

"Oh, how is this? And Father Maynard here! What does it mean?"

"I am so glad to see you, Edith," said Mrs. Thetford, her tears flowing freely. "I did not leave home this morning at all intending to get here; but I drove to Worrel, to see Father Maynard, and then I heard that he was at Steeplehill. I left the carriage there, and came to the village in a fly. When I was getting out of the fly at the inn, I saw Sir Godfrey and Mr. Macdonnel ride by. Then I was going to the Dawsons', where Father Maynard was said to be, when I saw him enter the quadrangle as if he was coming here. Of course I followed him; and we have just had five minutes' talk in the sacristy. I am going now. Good bye, Edith."

"I did not want to hear all that," said Edith. "Why are you here? Why are you shedding tears? Why do you not want to see my father? What is the matter?"

"I am not going to see your father. I believe that I shall never see him again, or not for many years. I have made a resolution, and I should be afraid of breaking it. I am not going to be your mother, my dear Edith." She pressed her in a close embrace, and then left her more dead than alive.

Edith never answered her, and Mrs. Thetford and Father Maynard walked out of the room together.

## CHAPTER XII.

## A WORRIED HEART.

EDITH remained one minute longer in the sacristy. Once more it seemed as if everything in this world was changed. All things out of joint and getting into wrong places; and she, poor child, standing amid the noiseless wreck, bewildered as to the cause; yet stretching forth her hands helplessly, and crying in her heart—"Is it I? Have I done it?" Helen Thetford's face of woe, so deep that it was calm; her voice of love, tenderer for the suffering that mingled with it—what did it all mean? She pressed her crossed hands on her beating heart. "Oh, my father—my dear father!" Little things, which have no life in words, had taught Edith that her father looked to Helen Thetford for the domestic happiness of his future life; and now Edith felt that she could have died to get her back for him.

"And I am going away!" she thought.

The next moment she was in the chapel, and on her knees. Now she could search her heart. Now she had ceased to say *to-morrow*—*to-morrow* I will pray, I will resolve, I will act. Now, in simplicity, she spoke—spoke without form, as souls often do in sorrow—"I have promised myself in a great sacrament, because I could not contemplate a future that I thought would humble me. I have been proud all my life, and I am caught in my own snare. I resolve, if possible, to give up Angus Macdonnel; but I must speak to Father Maynard first. I know that my pride will be found out. I know that people will say that now I am not to have a rival here I sacrifice Angus. But I must bear that. I have deserved it. But it will not be true. Thou wilt know that it is not true; for I pray,—

Oh! give her back to him. Have mercy on Thy creatures, and give them back to each other. He is young, still young—he has a long life perhaps before him. Why should he live alone? And she is holy and good, and they deserve each other. Oh, hear me, hear me!” And Edith wept, and lifted up her streaming eyes, and pleaded fearlessly, and with an open heart and a childlike spirit.

She prayed till the sound of horses’ feet, entering the paved yard, fell upon her ears. Then she got up, for she had something to do.

As she left the chapel she met Martha.

“Miss Mortimer! Oh, you were there! Father Maynard bid me say that he should be back by seven o’clock, and would sleep here, if you were not afraid. But I will get ready the bath-room, and——”

“What is the matter?” interrupted Edith.

Martha held up her finger.

The first strokes of the passing-bell, which still tolled for death at Steeple-hill, broke upon the stillness.

“Has it anything to do with Mrs. Thetford?” asked Edith, quite bewildered.

“No—no. I can’t tell. She left a note for Sir Godfrey. John is now going with it to the stables.”

“But the bell?” gasped Edith.

“The fever, my dear; the fever,” said Martha, and wiped her eyes. “It has been dreadful for two days. Father Maynard was up all last night at Kate Dawson’s. You see there was company here, and we wanted to get them off. Mrs. Bright is a real lady, though she has had her fidgets; she gave him breakfast.”

“But the bell?” again repeated Edith, her whole frame trembling; “for whom is it, I mean?”

“Oh! what is that? Who calls? There’s an accident at the stables;”—and Martha rushed into the yard.

There had indeed been a loud noise, an odd scrambling noise, and then a cry for help. Edith ran out, and followed Martha towards the stables. Her father was on the ground; his horse panting and terrified, with arched neck and open nostrils, stood loose by the stable door; and John and Angus Macdonnel were trying to raise Sir Godfrey from

the pavement. In a moment Edith was by his side. He tried to smile as he looked at her. He held Mrs. Thetford's note in his hand.

"How was it?" said Edith.

"Oh—he jerked at the horse's rein, or stuck the spurs in, or something," said Angus. "I never saw such a thing in my life. It was lucky he was not killed. The horse reared, and slipped, and fell over with him, and he is cruelly hurt, I'm sure. You had better go in, Edith—Why, what's the matter? you look——"

"Never mind," said Edith, earnestly; and stooped to her father. "Papa, shall I keep that note for you. I can keep it."

He looked at her earnestly and inquiringly, as he lay still on the pavement, with an expression of acute pain on his face.

"I have seen her," she whispered.

He gave up the paper as she touched it with her fingers, and never took his eyes from her face. His lips moved; but Edith heard no words.

"Now, try again to get me up," he said, with an evident effort to be cheerful.

They did get him up. But not till John had said, "Master's shoulder is put out," and Martha had sent for the surgeon.

The village doctor had gone to a distant patient. His apprentice came, and after a little unskilful handling, said he was afraid to do more. Five miles off another surgeon lived, and he was sent for; but in the meantime, Sir Godfrey's arm and shoulder were swelling frightfully, and his pulse was getting higher and higher; the misery of his mind, added to the suffering of the body, was throwing him into a violent fever. He had been alone with Edith for a few minutes, but she had nothing to say which could comfort him.

"What did she say?" asked Sir Godfrey.

"Only that she was not—was not going to be——" Then Edith's strength failed, and she burst into tears.

"But she refers to Father Maynard, when does he come?"

"Oh, he comes at seven," Edith answers, gladly.

But it is not five, yet. However, the surgeon has arrived, and the apprentice with him. Edith and Lady Sarah leave the room: only Martha and John stay. Edith suffers extremely, for her father's sake. She had seen him welcome Mr. Barber with a smile, and she had heard him say cheerfully to young Mr. Leach that he shall have another trial at him; but brave words and well-tutored looks cannot deceive her; and, what is more, there is something—something she has never seen before in her aunt's face. Edith has heard her give orders to send to Worrel for ice. And Captain Forrest has had a private interview with her: and people have sent from the village to inquire. And Edith, again leaving the chapel, has heard the apprentice say, "Bad job!" The old butler has sent into the village to find Father Maynard; and that passing bell, which had ceased its solemn tones for nearly an hour, is booming forth again.

There is something inexpressibly trying in the suffering that belongs to those moments when an operation is going forward: it is extremely harassing to some people to wait. Edith was a very bad waiter. Everybody seemed to live in the passages, except Angus. He was smoking furiously, walking up and down the lilac walk.

Then noises—sometimes really loud noises, came from her father's room, as if people were tumbling about: and now, Lady Sarah stood very—very pale, with her watch in her hand.

Edith was not alarmed; she was only anxious, and worn with waiting. No thought of danger struck her heart. When a quarter of an hour had passed, Edith's heart began to beat flutteringly. They had sent for brandy.

She went to her aunt, who was walking up and down an ante-room, saying her beads. "Aunt, is there anything wrong? Is there danger with a dislocated shoulder? Why are they so long?"

"They can't reduce it, Edith. He is quite exhausted. They have tried strength as well as skill. There is a resistance on his part, an involuntary resistance in these

cases ; and the weather is very hot, and he has trouble at his heart you know, and this fever in the village——” She stopped. Mr. Barber had joined them.

He said Sir Godfrey could bear no more, at present ; that he had engagements ; that his patient might try to sleep ; that they wished some one else to be called in, to help them ; that they would be back in two hours.

Edith saw her father for a moment. He was a sad spectacle. He was exhausted, exceedingly, and Lady Sarah made the room dark, and led Edith away, leaving John and Martha to watch.

When Edith and her aunt entered the sitting-room, they found that Father Maynard had just arrived.

“Mrs. Bright made me undergo quite a purification in her house ; she was so much afraid of exposing Sir Godfrey to any infection. I have been talking to your surgeon ; he has grown quite nervous, and that is a very bad thing. I am very glad that Captain Forrest has gone for some one else. I had a message that you wished to speak to me ;” turning to Edith. “My time is precious, for we have death all around us.”

“Who are gone ?” asked Lady Sarah. “Of my people, little Matilda Dawson, and two of the Gerards—factory girls, and James Brewer.”

“Did they ring the passing bell for them ?” asked Edith.

“No, no, not for Catholics, I think.”

“For whom, then ?”

“For Hester Flasher, and a little boy of Mrs. Vine’s, at the inn.”

Edith scarcely heard the end of the sentence—Hester Flasher—Hester Flasher. Her face grew crimson, then pale as death. Her heart spoke loudly within her. At the thought of the disembodied spirit, how her soul bowed itself in awe.

“She was a well-meaning girl,” said Father Maynard, with a little tremour in his voice, and not looking at Edith, but away towards the window. “And they were most amiable in their lives together ; a very united family ; a good deal risen in the world, and risen by their own exer-

tions, and very charitable. They never gave a dinner-party, Mrs. Bright has just said, until they could afford to give away all that was left to the poor, or something equivalent to it."

"We met her at Kate Dawson's," says Edith, looking at her aunt.

"And—and," hesitates Father Maynard, "you may like to hear that—poor girl, she was delirious—that she talked through her illness of a little kindness of yours. You played a duet with her, and it seemed to please them; and in her delirium, she raved about it, and praised you, and said she was happy; sang wildly at times, but always with a sort of joy, and in fact went out of life talking about you. Her mother told Mrs. Bright, and said that the evening of that little event had perhaps been one of the happiest of her life.

"Oh, gifts neglected," said Edith, in a voice sorrowing and low, but firm and distinct. "Oh, influence unemployed. How easy it is scarcely to do wrong, yet not to do right. Oh, Hester, my whole soul stoops before thee now! There are a hundred things for which I could ask you to forgive me, and this is gone up against me—that you learnt that I had talents and education, a great name, and a long lineage—you saw that I was an object of mark in our little world, and that I despised the little world where, because it was little, I might have edified and done good. How great I felt when I parted from you that night; and *now!*"

She lifted up her face, sad, beautiful, and tear-stained.

"Where are you, Hester? Oh! Father Maynard, where is she? Oh, I know how to love her now! Alas! what creatures we are—that, because of a graceless step, an ill-chosen colour, a vulgar word, we should forget the priceless gem that dwells within. Oh! why have I judged people too hardly for these things? Why did I never recollect that all would end in the solemn wonder of the winding-sheet?"

"My dear child, my dear Edith," said Lady Sarah, "you can pay your debts to her now, and follow her with your prayers to where her goodness is remembered and her

ignorance is not judged. We live in a world of Hope. And for yourself, recollect forbearance is not learnt in a day, and humility is not a natural instinct. You have had your mortifications, your trials, and your reproofs; and you have still, perhaps, a great deal to bear. Don't grieve, don't reproach yourself too much. Thank God, rather."

"Thank God for my failings?" said Edith, with a sorrowful smile.

"Lady Sarah means that you are not to lose courage, or to dwell upon former weakness, except in the way of thanking God that it is known," said Father Maynard.

"Let me go on now," said Edith, "and tell you, before my aunt, what I want to say. I want to give up Angus. If I had spoken to you, as my father wished me to do—as my own better-self suggested—I should not have accepted him. I want to give him up, for my pride only—my pride—said 'Yes.' I want to get things back to what they were. I want papa and Mrs. Thetford to be brought together again. I want nothing better than to live here, and see him very happy. Help me, Father Maynard."

The priest smiled. Edith had spoken almost without taking breath. So eagerly, so simply, she told all her wants; and now she was looking up at his face and saw the smile which seemed to be directed towards something a long way off, and not meant for her.

"Why do you look so?" said the eager girl.

He looked at her calmly, when she spoke.

"And so self-will rises up against the things that are right, and '*I must*' and '*I can't*' hold their reign for a time. And then, when they can no longer abide their own mischief, they come to the church, and say, 'I want to have the old things put straight again. I want the world to return to what it was before.' *I can't* recall the past—*I can't* make yes into no. I can't replace Sir Godfrey in Mrs. Thetford's good opinion."

"Her good opinion!" exclaimed Edith, rising up; her pale cheek growing warm with displeasure—"her good opinion!"



"Yes, he has acted as she does not like. She will not trust her happiness to his keeping. She has asked him to give her back her word in a way he cannot refuse."

"How has he displeased her?" asked Edith, trembling.

"I have no right to tell you—now. At least, not now. Not till I have talked to him."

"Oh! she never loved him at all," said Edith, contemptuously.

There was silence. Then she spoke again; and in such a heart-broken way.

"Oh! I don't want to speak ill of Helen. I don't want to think ill of anybody. Oh, tell me if she really did love him honestly, and bravely, and with a faithful heart, as he ought to be loved?"

Still there was silence—one deep sob broke it—Lady Sarah spoke through her emotion.

"Next to God's honour, my dear child, she loved your excellent father. I know Helen. Let that matter alone, Edith. Send it to heaven on your prayers. Do your own duty—shape your own course right—you *may*, you *can* command that."

"Who will tell Angus that I can never see him again?" said Edith.

"No one," said Lady Sarah. "Some things are only done well when we do them ourselves; this is one of them."

So Edith walked to the writing-table and penned a note:—"I don't know what has passed between you and papa; but, of course, I can guess. Papa would not refuse me anything. But I have deceived both him and you. You will despise me for saying it; but I never deceived myself. I can only say two things—that I repent of what I have done with a soreness of spirit which you can scarcely imagine, and that I cannot marry you. I recall my words. I am not any longer engaged to you. I could not marry you. I have done very wrong and despicably; but I should do more wrong if I persevered in ruining my own happiness, for I should certainly ruin yours. I will say another thing. I said 'Yes' to you selfishly, and

because something had happened to wound my pride. I should be very glad not to see you again for some time; but I must not dictate about that."

She did not read this note aloud. Without delay she sent it down to the smoker in the lilac walk. Then she went to the door of her father's room, and heard, thankfully, the longdrawn breath, which showed that he was sleeping. She heard Father Maynard leave the sitting-room. The footsteps died away in the passages, and woke up again in the quadrangle at the back of the house, then came the swing of the gate. She was sorry he was gone, and wondered about his coming back. Then came other steps. They were those of Angus; quick, firm, almost, her imagination called them, angry steps. He entered the room in which she had left her aunt. "I ought to go. I don't know. I don't like it. But I should get it over—get it over while papa is sleeping." So Edith renews her courage, repeats some holy words, and walks straight into the presence she dreads.

Angus was standing up, a picture of indignation. Her aunt was sitting at the writing-table Edith had just left. Angus held her note towards her as she came in.

"Edith, take this nonsense. I am not going to be treated in this way. Because Sir Godfrey has put his shoulder out, you are going to turn nun, I suppose. Why, people put their shoulders out every day. I did, two years ago. Here, burn this folly. He and I settled it all in our ride, as nicely as possible. He likes it very much, I can assure you. And what do you mean by saying you have never deceived yourself?" Getting very angry—"You don't mean to tell me that you made your father believe that you liked me, and that you didn't like me, and don't like me?"

Edith held fast by the table, for she could not stand without help.

"I do not love you. And only the highest respect and affection could excuse my marrying you. I really said the truth in that note. If I had answered your letter the night before that on which I did answer it, I should have said 'No.' I told papa I was going to refuse you. I

did not tell papa I had changed my mind till the letter was gone. I have done very wrong, and I want you to forgive me."

"Oh, yes, I'll forgive you," said Angus, with a smile. "But I won't give you up, Edith. I have been accepted by you, and I have arranged matters with Sir Godfrey, and you are mine. I believe all this to be some Jesuitical trick of Father Maynard's. I am not going to be made the sport of his priestcraft. You are to have full liberty in your religion, and everything done that your church demands; it is all with your father's approval—that's enough. Give me your hand, Edith?"

"No," said Edith, firmly. "Don't treat me like a child. I say that I have changed my mind. I say that I have done wrong—that I beg your forgiveness—that I despise myself. Pray believe and understand me. I am not going to marry you, and I wish—I wish——"

"What, pray?"

"That you would go away," says Edith, with a gasp; and Angus burst out laughing.

Lady Sarah fidgets for a moment in her chair, and then is still again.

Angus ceases laughing, and then says: "Take a turn in the garden with me, Edith—you have not been out to-day."

"I don't mean to say that I wish you to go to-night," says Edith, gathering strength. "Papa is so ill, you will like to stay till his shoulder is set. Captain Forrest is gone to Watermouth, to bring the hospital surgeon here; but to-morrow, Angus, to-morrow you can go—you must—you are to go. Papa is too ill to take any part. I dare not appeal to him. I can't say any more. *I have behaved ill.* I am sorry. You are going away to-morrow. And I shall be very much obliged by your not asking to see me again."

"I suppose you know that after such atrocious conduct you have no right to expect to be looked upon as a gentlewoman. A more shameful, unprincipled piece of flirtation was never heard of. There are some people in the world who will have a different opinion of you, Miss Mortimer, when I tell my story."

Edith remembered Father Maynard's words, and tried to thank God.

"If our little world has thought me better than I am, then thank God for undeceiving it, and for making me know my fault."

She did not speak.

"You must not expect that I shall be scrupulous," said Angus. "Your own written words brought me here. I told my mother that you had accepted me. I told several friends at Menadarva, and in London, that I was coming here for my wife; I did not mention your name, but I shall have no scruple in doing so now. I am not going to be thought false and boastful. I shall not hesitate to vindicate my word by the fullest exposure of your conduct."

"You have a right to do as you please,—as you think best. I have no rights, because I have behaved so ill," says Edith. But she has no voice, and her words come forth with pain and difficulty.

Angus reddens; he is again getting angry. He sees how much she feels what he has said, and he also feels that nothing can shake her.

"I have no wish to stay another hour where I am not wanted," he said, with affected calmness. "When Sir Godfrey is awake, I shall tell him what has passed, and go."

"You cannot see papa; he is to be kept quiet. You can stay till to-morrow, if you please; but you are not to think of seeing papa to-day."

"Excuse me, I shall not ask your leave about seeing Sir Godfrey."

Lady Sarah rose up, and came to the table.

"Mr. Macdonnel, if this fever was not at the inn you should not remain here one hour. You will take the choice my niece offers you. You can stay to see Sir Godfrey to-morrow, or go to-night,—go now."

"The sooner the better," replied Angus.

He advanced towards Edith, and held out his hand; she was going to take it, but Lady Sarah laid her hand on her arm, and held her back.

"Do Edith justice, Mr. Macdonnel. If she has done you wrong, she has confessed it, and you cannot doubt her sorrow. You have threatened, for your own credit sake, for the gratification of your pride, to expose her failing. Do her justice, and unsay those hard words."

"No—no, never," said Angus, angrily, and left the room.

"Now, now, Edith ;" said Lady Sarah, cheerfully—"Now, to the Mother of Good Counsel——"

"Oh, everything is going wrong," exclaimed Edith,

"No, nothing is wrong, when faith is first. Resolve from this moment, not only to do what may be done lawfully, but to do always what is best—what the Mother of Good Counsel would advise. It may not be a sin to marry a Protestant ; but it is far *better not* to marry one. If you are out of this trial, forget its sorrows, and preserve its experience. Let us go to your father."

She had hardly spoken when Captain Forrest came in. He was covered with dust, and it was easy to see he had ridden far and fast. "Not done yet—but sleeping. Well, we can't have Martinby till to-morrow ; but Barber will be here soon again," he rubbed his forehead anxiously—"Oh, but Mrs. Trotman wants her poor old father to see Sir Godfrey. He happens to be there, and has had a talk with Barber. It is no use concealing from you that it is the most difficult case that ever came under his care. He has set hundreds of shoulders, he says, and yet the resistance offered here is something insurmountable. I would let old Trotman see him. Barber has fever-patients in hand. There is the bell. Well, the old man is come, I think." And so he was. Even at that moment, Edith could not repress a smile, at the antiquated appearance of this powdered old man, who still carried a cane, and bowed at every step, and kept up a not unmusical humming sound, like a good old drone, as he was, perhaps. He smelt of violet pomatum, and wore silver buckles at his knees and shoes, and silk stockings, and said "your ladyship" at every word, even to Edith, who was not prepared for such a distinction.

He began with the measles, which her ladyship had

done him the honour of having, when her ladyship's ladyship mother, had done him the honour of sending for him ; and to this circumstance he proved, with many bows, and hummings of uncommon prolongation, that the intrusion of this visit was to be referred. Then came, in the same style and manner, an account of the choicest cases of dislocations of the shoulder, which " Old Trotman," as Captain Forrest, in the anxiety of the moment, still chose to call him, but whom, for love of truth and genealogy, we must call Evans—that old Evans had ever known.

Lady Sarah listened with the profoundest patience and the perfection of politeness. Captain Forrest longed to interrupt him—that was written on his face—but he too had learned patience ; and Edith still stood exactly where she had stood when confronting Angus, and still she held fast by the table—in fact, this was now a necessity, for the room rocked, and in her ears there was a sound, far louder than could be accounted for by the musical humming of the little powdered prater before her. She heard nothing else ; she only saw his lips move, and she stared at his little demonstrations, and frowned helplessly at the tortoise-shell snuff-box, with the cypher in silver upon it, which grew gigantic under her gaze.

Poor Edith, she began to totter, and but for a chair pushed hastily to her by Captain Forrest, she would have fallen to the ground. Thankfully she leaned back for its support, and tearfully she turned her face aside, and buried it in the cushions. She could not, dared not move, poor child. She would not speak for the thought that if she opened her mouth she should scream. So, very unlike a heroine, she shook her head and smiled very sillily ; and when scraps of biscuit and a wine-glass were presented to her mouth, by fingers she knew to be Martha's, she opened her lips, like a baby, and took in what touched them ; and after a few sippings and swallowings, she sat up, and wiped her eyes, and looked about in the weakest and most common-place manner, and became sensible to old Trotman talking of " the not unprecedented exhaustion which had attended the pardonable anxiety and very natural solicitude of existing circumstances."

Martha had come in to say that Sir Godfrey was awake. As soon as Edith was able, which was almost immediately, she was sent to her father's room.

"Papa, will you see Mr. Evans?"

"My love, I want to see Father Maynard."

"But he is not here."

"I know that. Here, you know all, my darling, so read that."

Edith read these words, written by Father Maynard: "Pray be at rest, and trust in God. I am gone to Thetford Royals. Of course, I cannot return till to-morrow; but I shall travel through the night, on account of the sickness about. Try to be at ease. I cannot fix an hour for seeing you,—but as soon as possible. Hope and trust."

"Hope and trust!" repeated Edith.

"Hope and trust!" echoed Sir Godfrey. "It is a serious thing to undo hopes and plans at my time of life." He looked a little confused, and yet as if he would put a brave face on things. "Hope and trust! But, Edith, my shoulder gives me pain. What should I see that antediluvian old man about? I thought I heard Forrest's voice. And oh, Edith, I heard that bad news about poor Hester Flasher. Can't you send some message to her mother? I feel very much for them."

"Yes, papa; but now you will see Mr. Evans?"

"Where is Angus? I ought to see him in this interval, I think. My dear child, what's the matter?"

Edith held her father's hand, and the tears dropped slowly on that hand, and she could not speak.

"Edith, Edith, do you repent?"

In an instant she recovered herself; she knew by the tone of that beloved voice, which was trembling, and strangely sharp, that she *must* be firm.

"I have behaved so ill, papa. I am free again, and happy once more. Angus is gone, gone away rather angry, but not irrecoverably miserable,"—and she smiled. "I am not going to tell you any more now, if you please; only you must be troubled with a naughty child, a little longer."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Sir Godfrey, "I am too happy to ask questions,"—and he pressed her fingers to his lips. "Now I will see Forrest, and old Evans, and Lady Sarah, and anybody—everybody—who besides?"

"Hush, papa, you frighten me, and every instant is of consequence, and you and I gossiping."

So Edith goes away, and the gentlemen are all talking two minutes afterwards.

Mr. Evans examines the shoulder, and begins to ask questions of whom Sir Godfrey remembers of those who lived in the village when, as a boy, he had visited the place with his father; and he apologises for losing his sight, and gives Sir Godfrey both trouble and pain in getting him into a particular position for examining the shoulder. Then he must have him lean back on Captain Forrest; and at last, he must lean against a chair placed on the bed,—and he assures him that the limb will require great skill and care, and recommends perfect rest for some hours, and then says,—“You will excuse me while I change my spectacles.” And somehow the idea of the spectacles has taken Sir Godfrey’s attention; and then Mr. Evans says, “Your pulse, sir.” But the cunning old man lifts the shoulder quickly, and Captain Forrest withdraws his support, and the chair falls down, and Sir Godfrey gives a cry,—a loud report is heard, and the shoulder is set.

“Sir,” says Sir Godfrey, “you’ve half killed me.”

But the doctor only hums,—like a whole swarm of bees he hums,—and only pauses to say,—

“Yes, my dear sir; yes, sir, certainly,—the bandages I mentioned, Captain Forrest. The captain and I formed a little league against you. I have no doubt you suffered, sir. A cup of tea from the ladies’ room. I am an old-fashioned man. But, Sir Godfrey, only force or trick could set your shoulder; I am particularly pleased with this circumstance. I shall do myself the honour of presenting my congratulations to her ladyship.” And then, as he bandaged the shoulder, he tells the story of the measles for the fourth time that afternoon.

In half an hour, worn out and weak, Sir Godfrey sleeps,



but first Edith has knelt by his bedside, and has said with him the Litany of the Holy Name, and the Memorare; and then they have held each other's hands, and each, in the secret soul, has thanked God for the other."

"Edith," he whispers, "burn that note." She takes it from her little silver-bound pocket-book, and holds it to a taper's light.

When it was destroyed, he said—"You did not care for Angus?"

"I did not care for him, papa."

"Now, whatever is decided on at Thetford Royals, we will preserve our souls in peace; whatever the future has in store for us, we will preserve towards each other the treasure of candour and affection which has been our blessing till now. We will live loyal to God, and true to ourselves and each other, Edith."

"Yes, yes, papa."

"And now——"

"Oh, yes, papa—say it all—what more?"

"Why, only another cup of tea."

Up went Edith's heart. Up it went, so light, so buoyant, so free. She went to Lady Sarah—with her own hands she brought in the little luxury required—she persuaded Mr. Evans to sleep in the house, fearing that slight thirst might mean fever. It was the happiness of a thankful heart. She sent a note to Mrs. Flasher; she tried to say just what she felt, and felt she had not said it at all; but the sorrowing heart could discover real sympathy, and was thankful. Then there came a note, and with it one moment of fear—a note in Angus Macdonnell's hand, written and dated from Sir Marmaduke Mercer's.

He was engaged to Eleanor, and bluntly enough the news was conveyed to her. Her lip quivered. "My pride has given a mistress to Menadarva," she said. "Oh, what a mistress! farewell—farewell! Oh, my gentle mother. I am never going to think of you there any more. Poor Menadarva; farewell—farewell. I believe that I never quite gave up your loveliness till now!"

"A very good match," said Lady Sarah quietly.

Night came on, at least as much of night as is given

to that season of our year. All was still. Sir Godfrey was asleep. His servant in a dressing-room, at rest also. Captain Forrest at home. Old Mr. Evans in the land of dreams, no doubt. And Lady Sarah and Edith, sitting in the enjoyment of silence and tranquillity. The casement window was thrown wide open, and they turned their faces to the fragrant night air, for its balm refreshed them. The thrush had sung her last song, and all was peace, except one strange, unwonted sound, like a labourer at his work. The colour mounted to Lady Sarah's cheek as she heard it, and she rose to shut the window.

"What is it, aunt? Don't, please; don't shut the window—tell me?"

But Edith recollected quickly, and she turned pale, and spoke softly.

"I don't mind it, Aunt Sarah—you don't, I know. You only think of me. It is the digging of graves. I heard Mr. Evans say, some one was to be buried to-morrow. Don't let us shut out the sound that reminds us of those who have none to pray for them—of those who will soon be reckoned amongst the forgotten dead."

"From the depths we have cried unto Thee," answered Lady Sarah. And so, with low voices, and with mingling tears, they prayed the Church's prayer. And the measured sounds came dull from the labourer among the graves, and the night-air fanned them with its gentle gale. "Grant me grace to remember my death," said Lady Sarah; and Edith nestled closer to her side, and she felt her arm encircle her fondly.

"Love," said Edith—"love seems to come too late. My heart lays itself at her feet now, for she has seen—seen—I cannot speak it—to have penetrated eternity—to know all things now; to have given the great account. How dared I ever judge her, or hold her for one moment in contempt? Now, I hope—yes, I hope with all the strength of my soul, that He has found her faithful to her little knowledge; and I—I have *not* been faithful. I have, by one impulse of pride, filled a man's heart with rage and disappointment, and perhaps—only Heaven forbid—driven him to an unhappy marriage. And I might

have done worse. I had promised to do worse. Such as it is, it is the best I could do, having once done wrong. But as I talked to him I thought of the great account—the great account which *she* had lately given, and which as surely will some day come to me. ‘Give me grace to remember my death’—I had forgotten death. My heart was full of the thought of life. Never again shall I think of risking my soul’s health. Never again, if I can remember this night’s prayer!”

Edith felt the supporting arm press still more closely round her. Her aunt spoke calmly and clearly at her side.

“When your father, in his agitation on reading Helen’s note, checked his horse till it reared and threw him, he found that because he had consented to your marriage with a Protestant, Helen entreated to be free. She told me all—she wrote the note in my room—she read it to me. It was a trial to her. But she wrote so strongly, that he would not have refused. When your father asked you what you knew, and what she had said, it was only to discover whether you knew yourself to be the cause of his trial. Helen said what was true—that because you are so young, because you are attractive, because you have the ways that the world admires, because you are a convert, you are totally unfit—more than commonly unfit, I mean—to marry a Protestant. She said your father was guilty of risking your soul, by consenting to it; that, knowing you as you are, he should prefer to see you die, rather than send you into an unbelieving world, surrounded by riches, certain of admiration, and in captivity to a man of strong will and ungovernable impulse. She would not willingly marry a man, who could consent to thus risk your soul; and she left this house, determined, if possible, never to see Sir Godfrey again.”

“And papa never told me!”—exclaimed Edith. “He only bid me burn that note, and said that whatever came of Father Maynard’s visit to Thetford Royals, we were to be faithful to each other. How great, how good of papa. Oh, she will admire him more than ever now.”

“I don’t know—she thought him weak in not forbidding it. I entreated Father Maynard to go to her, and I

overcame his unwillingness, by assuring him of the trial it would be to you—too great a trial almost for your youth—if she should be lost to Sir Godfrey.”

“Oh, thanks—thanks—a thousand times thank you, Aunt Sarah; but it will be all right now. When will he come back? How soon can he be here? I could beg her forgiveness on my knees. It was all my own doing. There was no one to blame but myself. It is sixteen miles to Thetford. Father Maynard said he should travel through the night—why did he go in such a hurry?”

“Helen had told me she should go to-morrow to London, where Mr. and Mrs. Thetford are going next week. It was to avoid your father that she was going, and then she thought of visiting her aunt, who lives at Florence. There was no certainty of seeing her, except by going immediately.”

“Everybody is good, and energetic, and self-denying—everybody, except myself,” said Edith. “I am learning to know myself better, I hope.”

“Oh, Mother of Good Counsel, my soul puts its trust in thee; deign to direct it in the ways of the Lord!”

That was her last prayer that night.

The next morning came. Edith rose early. She heard the sound of wheels on the carriage drive, and ran to the gallery-window to look out. She saw Father Maynard get out of a carriage, his office-book in his hand, and he entered the house. Swiftly she descended to the hall. Lady Sarah stood there, and beckoned her to her side. She put her hand within her aunt's arm.

“You have been very kind,” said Lady Sarah to Father Maynard. “It was soon settled, I suppose?”—with a smile.

“Mrs. Frank Thetford is struck down with this fever,” said Father Maynard. “I *did* see her, and spoke to her as you wished.”

“Well?”

“Her thoughts are not here. She gave thanks that it was not to be—your marriage,” looking at Edith. “But as to herself, she knows her danger—she knows the rapid strides with which this scourge has come among us—she

knows that Hester Flasher was only ill four days, and died in delirium—she knows that it is the same fever, for she, no doubt, caught it at the inn here. She stayed there preparing that poor boy Charles Vine for death ; and he did die—Heaven be praised—making the acts of contrition and faith, which that excellent woman taught him. It was a sad scene in the inn ; she thought she had caught it. She once was completely overpowered. But the boy was twelve years old, and like a mere animal, and yet, at times, afraid to die. She could not leave the house ; and if she has won that untaught, ignorant soul for our Lord—why should we regret her reward coming quickly ?”

“No—no,” cried Edith, “Not quickly. Eternity is long enough. She has more to do.” Then she hid her face in her aunt’s arm, and said, “It is all my doing. If she dies, I shall have done it. Oh, it is a terrible penance, can I bear it ?—*I cannot* bear that she should die.” And still, in soft whispers, she poured out her heart to the faithful friend she leaned upon. “Papa will bear it. *They* will bear it—but *I never* can. It will be easy even for *them* to give her up ; but to me, it will be a life-long misery. Is it possible, that one act of selfish pride—even when repented of—should carry desolation so far ? But she won’t die,” she murmured between the choking sobs of her heaving heart ; “it would be too dreadful—it would be more than I could bear—Heaven is too merciful.” A kind hand was placed upon her lips, and a steady arm led her away, only for a few steps, only within the open door of Sir Godfrey’s little morning-room.

Then still standing, and still holding her in a firm embrace, Lady Sarah spoke, and spoke so hardly, as it seemed.

“Edith, how often have you determined to live *alone*, to have nothing to do with others, to shape your own course, to govern your own world, to act by yourself, to be sharer in no feelings that were not sweet to your own sense of the gentle and the refined ? You are now learning, that you *cannot* live alone—that no one can live to herself. You may wall yourself up with your pride, you may circle

yourself round with a fence of refinement ; but the Father of us all has ordered things another way. We must act and speak ; and as we walk through life, we scatter seed, which vegetates quickly, and spreads around poison or health, and we are answerable for the harvest that those who follow and press around us gather in. Let me say it again—you are now learning that you cannot live alone ; that there is no such thing as action done to oneself alone ; that life and death—nay, more—even Heaven and hell are in our hands for others, as well as ourselves, and that we cannot escape the responsibility. It is true that Helen Thetford may die ; it is true that your young heart may never recover the blow of such a sorrow ; it is true that your father may have a lonely home and a companionless age ; it is true that you may be for ever associated in his mind with the heaviest disappointment of his life ; it is true that this world may have on its face a shadow that time can never remove ; but, it is also true, that if this heart of yours shall learn in this hour of trial to give up self ; to live in a perfect charity for others ; to take its penance willingly, with an absolute submission, and hereafter to love God with that sweet fear, which is not slavery, but homage, and meekly to love others for His sake—if it learn to do this, it will have weaved a crown out of the scourge, and your father will know that, through his earthly sorrow, his sweet child has struggled to a high place in Heaven, where his soul, so strong in its silent simplicity, will seek its station by her side ; and in a little while we shall be glad if Helen Thetford, with less of separation from his presence than shall be ours, finds speedily her home among the blessed, and pours forth her soul in the loud raptures of eternal songs, where all is unchangeable joy.”

She led the speechless girl again into the hall, and then to the chapel. The household were gathering in, and from something that was said, Edith knew that her father had been helped along the passage above, and was in the little gallery over head. The days fixed for the masses for the lately dead among the poor Catholics at Steeplehill were given out, and then words which brought floods of relief—

ing tears to Edith's eyes—their prayers were asked for Mrs. Frank Thetford, who lay dangerously ill. She listened as if she expected some sound from the place where her father was, but there was not a sigh, or the slightest sound. The prayers for the dead followed, and Edith's nervous ear caught his voice, distinct from every other. *She had no voice; only her heart was speaking.* Scarcely to have saved Helen's life could she have spoken as he was speaking—and yet he knew it all.

All through the mass one idea associated itself with the thought that belonged to the holy sacrifice as it proceeded to the end. All through her heart was repeating—"Who lies dangerously ill?" The thing had been said by His priest before the altar, to His people kneeling round. It was like an appeal made to the church. They were all to pray—and elsewhere, at Worrel, at Thetford—and again, and again—and, "Oh, *I am not alone,*" cried Edith to herself; "hundreds will pray *my* prayer, for she is dangerously ill."

And sweet thoughts came of His works while here on earth. How often He had healed the sick, and how He had raised the dead to life. And now, at that moment, He is here again. And her heart feels that if, in the simplicity of a true faith, she shall raise her adoring spirit to the Blessed Sacrament, and say to Him there—"She is *dangerously ill*"—that she may be heard. But first she says, "*I am a sinner, and just are thy judgments, O Lord!*"



## CHAPTER XIII.

## REQUIESCANT IN PACE.

SIXTEEN miles off, where the waves of the ceaseless sea sent up their mysterious music, and wore to a wondrous marble the high barrier they could not overcome; where the farze-blossom crowned the cliffs with gold; where the far-spread waters sparkle in the light of a July sun, as though it had been sown with stars; where the sea-gull uttered its heart-stirring cry, and whirled in the air with its plaintive-voiced young,—there, nestling in the bosom of a steep valley that ran its course from the high table-land of Worrel, and the dim coal-district which has been spoken of, lay the fishermen's village of Thetford.

The sea that day sent up its living treasures to its surface, and dark places showed where lay the riches of traffic and food. The men who watched from the summit of the cliffs uttered the gladdening shout, and claimed the harvest of the deep for the nets to which they belonged.

"The Royals—the Royals, a-hoy!" Men ran from house and field, from labour and from food. The sea-beach was alive; the boats were manned, and the living mass encircled and won. Looking on this scene of life, planted with trees at the back, and firmly fixed on the sloping hill-side, was the "Great House." Great because it owned the little ones—because its place had been, for long centuries, that of a parent over all; but, greatest of all, because there they had kept the Faith. It had never been lost in that far-away place. The Babel-tongued monster had never found a rest for its cloven foot in Thetford Royals. It was the old house, and wore the same face still that the thirteenth century had seen. Towers, sturdy-looking, windowed all round, seemed growing from the



hill to support and strengthen it. It overlooked the village grandly, and was generally called "The Place."

There was a chapel in the house, and it was in daily use. The priest lived with them. But there was a sort of parish chapel besides. Between "The Place" and the village there stood the ugliest conceivable building; wrong in every way, and without the smallest aim at being right; and there mass was said on Sundays and holidays, and twice in the week besides—on the other days, the daily sacrifice was offered in the chapel of the house. From the cottagers' houses the windows of that building that deformed the landscape could be seen. A glittering light was visible as evening closed in, and now every man that hurriedly left his half-eaten meal at the call from the echoing cliffs looked that way, and moved his lips in a word or two of prayer, and signed himself with the blessed sign, as he turned, and quick, running down the slope, then leaping, flying from rock to rock down the almost perpendicular steep, joined his companions and his boat.

It was not a usual thing to see that light there. It marked a presence which usually dwelt under the protection of The House. But now there was in that chapel a sufficient guard—souls have watched and prayed there all the day, and through every hour of the past night. And when night comes again it will be fuller than it is now. Rich and poor will meet there; they will come from shore and sea; for there is a forty-hours' prayer held there for the life of Helen Thetford, who lies dangerously ill.

Yes, she lies there ill indeed. She lies in one of those octagon rooms in the south tower; her bed has been drawn towards a window, and she fixes her spiritless eyes on the pathless sea that stretches into the distance and mingles with the sky. The fever has passed away, but a terrible sickness has fallen upon her; she cannot move or speak; she takes no nourishment, and lies there wasting—"Waiting for death," the doctor says; "waiting God's will," say the watchers before the altar in the chapel below. Her parents by marriage are there. But Mrs. Thetford is heart-stricken, and shrinks away behind her, and Mr. Thetford can only say, "Helen, do you know us—can you

hear me, Helen? There are prayers for you in the chapel—could you hear us if we said some prayers?” A little motion about the eyes and mouth seems to show some understanding. He goes on. “Will you see Henry? he longs to see you?” But no notice is taken. Mrs. Thetford whispers that she is deaf. What are they to do? The doctor has bid them try to rouse her. Again her poor father speaks. “We have sent for Sir Godfrey Mortimer”—a quick quiver of the eye-lids. “Would you like to see him?”—her lips move; but that mouth is voiceless, and she has evidently made a great effort to say something, and they cannot tell what she means. They try her again, again, and again—they blame themselves; but she looks piteously at them, and after more than half an hour is trying to say those words again—and at last they understand—“*And Edith,*” exclaims Mrs. Thetford, and she smiles.

Henry Thetford has just knocked at the door, and been admitted by his mother. The nurse creeps in at the same time, having finished her dinner below. “Yes, sir,” says the good woman, emphatically, in answer to a look from Mr. Thetford.

“Leave it to me,” says Henry, and darts away. Soon, in a very few moments, with all the strong impetuosity of the boyhood and the manhood of twenty years, he is making his steeple-chase way from Thetford to Mortimer Manor. Helen has watched him from the room, and seems to know that Edith will come. Then they prevail with her to swallow a spoonful of jelly or arrow-root; but she is sick again; and the doctor comes, and he says, “She is sick unto death. Mrs. Thetford, don’t allow yourselves to hope. It is past hope. Only a miracle can cure this.”

But the faithful hearts before the altar cry, “O Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners *now*,” and from every heart goes up the thought of her for whom they pray. “*Now*, and at the hour of our death, O Merciful Jesus, have mercy on her.” They recommend her soul to Him who made her, who redeemed her, who sanctified her; and at His hands they seek her life.

When the evening comes, the chapel begins to fill.

That village, during the fishing season, is one of the busiest and the dirtiest places in the world. Do you think that the women came out with the brilliant blue petticoats and snowy aprons and tuckers which make up the colouring of happy-peasantry pictures? Do you think that I am going to tell you that the scent of the clover-meadows, and the waving bean-fields was fresh upon them? Do you suppose that their complexions were all of pink and white dairy-maid beauty?

Truth before poetry; or, rather, the poetry of truth must step in here.

They smelt of train-oil and the rank refuse which donkeys and panniers had been conveying all day from the fish-cellars to the distant manure heaps. Even those ablutions which respect and decency made necessary could not cleanse away the penetrating abominations. The women, and even children, were blistered and crimsoned beneath the broiling sea-side sun. They are in that state which makes them hurry and bustle from habit, even when they might rest, and be at ease. Night and day, by turns, they work during that harvest of the deep; always watching, always hoping, always ready, always in an agitation of desire to secure and store up that living treasure which is, to them, home, and food, and warmth, and winter comfort, even luxury and ease. It is their life; and a whole year's round of blessings hangs upon those boats, and nets, and those living "shoals." And sleepless nights, and toil-worn days, and wearied limbs, and loathsome scents, are not sorrows in such a cause; but are welcomed with great thanksgiving.

They poured in—men and women. Some decent and clean; others with the apology of a clean apron and cap only; others, again, just as they had rushed up the steep cliff from the fish-cellars on the beach. The Angelus tolled out, and those who could not come, heard, and bared their heads, and began the words which tell of the wonderful work, with which lies the strength of our faith, the hope of our hearts, the eloquence of our lips—our whole spiritual life: "The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary——"

In they came—the poor, the hard-worked, but *not* the ignorant. In they came—old men and young, and little boys whose lives were spent upon the waves, whose history was, indeed, written on the sands, who had never been ten miles inland in their lives, but who were *not* the ignorant, for they knew Holy Mother Church, and she had taught them all that need be known. They knew Her, and knowing Her, they knew Him—they believed, and were saved.

They poured in, and with them a calm-faced, earnest-eyed girl. Was it wonder, or grief, or some new interest that gave her countenance that thoughtful, examining air? And whose is that fine form and face of melancholy beauty, whose arm is bound to his side by a black silk scarf?

Sir Godfrey guides Edith to a bench, and they both kneel down.

Soon the priest enters, and Father Maynard, who kneels by Sir Godfrey, and who is going to preach. And then Mr. Thetford and Henry, and two of the servants, and these are the Acolytes that night. And then begin the prayers for the sick, the litany for the dying.

How can her father say every response with a quiet voice? When sobs are all around, how can Mr. Thetford keep his spirit so still—his soul unmoved within him?

They have done what Edith has not quite done yet. They have learned the prayer of a perfect submission. They are adoring God's will, whatever it may be; and they have given up, not only Helen Thetford—not only Helen, but their own hearts and wills, and joys and hopes;—they are God's—there is but one prayer for them—"Be it done unto me according to Thy will."

There is a pause, and Edith is absorbed in the things that surround her. The people are praying their own prayers, and they are *hers*. Little groans and sighs, and half-uttered words, so offensive to cultivated minds, so unnecessary as the educated think, accompany their prayers; but they do not disedify Edith now: she listens, tries to catch them even; for they are all the expressions of that desire which glows within her heart—that burning

prayer, that Helen Thetford may get well. There is charity of soul. She and they are one. To disturb them is to grieve her; to stop them is to rob her. She pleads it before God as she kneels. "Thou hast promised to hear prayer, to answer prayer, to remember us in the day when we turn unto Thee, and these people pray—Lord, hear their prayers."

She remembers that the doctor has said, that recovery is impossible, that she is dying slowly—even *then* actually dying; but she does not care for that in the least, it does not damp the energy of her prayer in the slightest degree. "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make her whole." So faith holds firmly on; and Edith unites her heart to the hearts of those around her, and gets to truer words: "Lord, hear *our* prayers."

All loneliness and exclusiveness are gone for ever. No scorn will ever live in her heart any more. If Helen lives, it will be because of the prayers of the many, and Edith begins to love the world around her with that pure love which the Church calls charity.

Father Maynard preaches, and Edith feels that Helen is to die. Why does he not preach of hope and the reward of faithful prayer? Because, her heart whispers, to love God is better than *hoping* or *having* either. Though strong hearts there plead with Heaven, "She clothed us when we were at misery's door; she fed us when we had nothing to live upon; she visited us in hours of lonely sickness; she freed my child from prison; she drew away my darling from temptation; she instructed our little ones; she taught ourselves by her good example; she buried our dead, and followed them with her charity to the world beyond the grave." Though they add to this pleading such thoughts as these: "And not only she, but those with whom she lives; they have, from generation to generation, been the ministers to us of good; now hear our prayer for them." Still, Father Maynard's sermon is to tell them to love God, and give Him freely, lovingly, whatever He asks. And at last Edith's heart cries out: "Yes, if Thou seest good. Though my pride will have done it, I will give Thee freely, lovingly, whatever

Thou mayst ask, though it be the dearest treasures of my soul. I give them now to Thee. I give Thee my own self-approval, for I must ever blame myself. I give Thee back the joy that has been the sunshine of my life—the joy of having been nothing but happiness to my father. Change my gladness into sorrow, change my happy pride into a mourning humility, change my hope to fear—I give up to Thee every hope and joy, every emotion of my soul, to do with them what Thou wilt. Only give me Thy grace and Thy love—Thy grace and Thy love,” she repeats the words, and steadies her soul upon those thoughts. It is a very hard trial to Edith.

She sees her father still, calm, and listening earnestly. She knows this trial will be for his purification, and she consents to it, though her heart is trembling. And notwithstanding her victory over herself, she sheds tears when she thinks that her own hand will have lighted the furnace of his trial. Yet she submits. Her strong heart bends before omnipotent power, and though she shrinks and shivers beneath the upraised hand, she submits and adores. And down deep in her furrowed heart she plants the seeds of good resolutions. She looks steadily on the chill future, and it glows in the brightness of her courage, and softens in the purity of her sincerity, and so she leaves it all to Him.

The sermon is over. The “O Salutaris” has begun. Are the voices rough and harsh? Are they sharp, shaking, toneless, uneducated; out of time and tune? Who knows?—*Not* that almost over-refined ear, that too-susceptible temperament. Those high-wrought nerves know only one thing—that hearts are speaking, and He condescends to hear them.

She speaks herself. Forth comes the full-toned sweetness of a perfected power—“O Salutaris Hostia!” and then that, too, was over. And they have bowed their heads for benediction, and all are gone.

Mr. Thetford helped Edith up the hill. She did not speak. “It is all very humble,” he said, answering what he thought might be Edith’s thoughts.

“What is humble?” she asked.

He looked round at her, and saw her thoughtful face. "The chapel. You don't like it. It is so tasteless and wrong; and of course you felt it so."

"No, no," Edith exclaims. "I have become endowed with a strengthened vision. I can see beyond the surface, Mr. Thetford. It so reminds me of the vision of St. Peter, and I seem to hear those instructive words: 'That which God has cleansed, do not thou call common.'"

"You are quite right," Mr. Thetford answered, quickly. "I will now tell you that that poor chapel was built in my father's time, when he lived here before his marriage, and was poor. But he was holy. Just at that time the fish, which are the treasure of this village, set in towards this bay in extraordinary quantities, so that the sons and daughters of the place needed no longer to migrate to the coal district, as they had before done. They remained here, and the village increased till the chapel in the house could not hold them. Then my father determined to mortgage his land to build a church for them; but they heard of it, and would not let him. They built that place themselves. Not a labourer worked for money. My father gave land and stone. They had no architect. They did it themselves. So great was the enthusiasm that children worked, and the women held the hods for the men who were the masons. They had built fish-cellars, why should they not build a church? I have been told many times that I ought to take it down—that I ought to build a better. Do you think I could build a better? Do you think I should do well to pull down the associations of the hearts of the poor?"

"Oh, let it be always sacred," said Edith, hardly able to command her voice; she was thinking of all she had felt that night.

"It is holy ground," says Mr. Thetford. "There, in the bad times, a priest from the house who had escaped, after a long concealment in our hiding chamber, was taken by the government spies. Then the people of the village attempted a rescue. They did not succeed. The holy father suffered elsewhere. So the people unanimously chose that spot. The blessed acre it was called. The

produce had invariably been given to the poor from that terrible day; so it was really like claiming their own. But there is a thing that Henry and I talk of doing," continued Mr. Thetford; "we talk of doing as they have done with the holy sites in Rome. We are going to build over that mean little chapel, and leave it for a side-aisle, keeping its present dimensions, however improper they may be, and still having the people's week-day masses said there. We may line it with cedar, and paint it with vermillion, if we please, and at our leisure; but it will stand there, and not have a stone removed. I should like to do that very much."

They had reached the house now. Mr. Thetford met the nurse in the hall.

"She sleeps, sir. A real sleep. She has had a table-spoonful of beef-tea. The doctor is here. He does not give hope; but he says that this sleep is a blessing."

When they saw the doctor he said that twelve hours would decide the case. "We must give her nourishment," he said; "and then she will become delirious, and nature will conquer or sink. It is past medicine; we can only be prudent and careful, and resign ourselves to the result."

Edith crept up-stairs, and waited in an ante-room for Mrs. Thetford, who was in Helen's room. In about an hour she came to her.

"She is awake, and is to have some tea. I begin to hope."

"Alas! I cannot help hoping," said Edith. "A single word wakes hope to life again."

"Well, let us only rest in God, and make him the offering of our will; there will be no harm in hoping then," answered Mrs. Thetford.

They waited a little longer together.

"It is only seven o'clock," said Mrs. Thetford; "but Helen ought to be made comfortable for the night. Wait here, I will go to her and come back."

In a few minutes Mrs. Thetford beckoned to Edith to come to her. She advanced to the open door of communication, and looked into that solemn chamber. Helen lay



with her wide-open, full, dark, and as it seemed, almost sightless eyes; no sign of life about her, except that open eye, which never turned to look when Edith came to her side and spoke.

"Are you better?" said Edith, softly. No answer.

"Are you sleepy?"—but still no answer.

Mrs. Thetford stooped her head to her forehead and kissed her tenderly. "It is Edith, dear Helen."

A quick, wild glance,—and Edith, kneeling down, brought her sweet gentle face in a line with Helen's, and said, "I should like you to speak to me."

She looked at Edith with a fixed, frowning, painful look; she drew one hard, difficult breath. "You won't?" she said, and her poor lips fluttered after that great effort, and large tears—two or three—slowly welled up and overflowed on her quivering cheek.

"I won't," said Edith, softly, but with great solemnity.

"Prayers," whispered Helen.

Mrs. Thetford knelt down and put a rosary within Helen's hand. Her fingers grasped it. But she did not move or raise her eyes to look at them; still wide open, with a strange, dreamy, and sadly bright expression, those eyes looked forth with as little life or meaning in them as could be, together with existence.

Mrs. Thetford began to repeat a portion of the night prayers. She paused, for she could not go on; but Helen could:—"Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. Lord Jesus, receive my soul."

They rose from their knees and said "Good night."

The doctor was there; he was to sleep in the house. He came into the ante-room to talk of her to Mrs. Thetford, and Edith stood by. He heard her say to Mrs. Thetford, "How strange it is!—can life go out in this way?" "She is not to be judged by common rules," he answered; "she is a person of such strong habitual self-command, that even now her strength of mind and self-control have not left her. A weaker-minded woman—or let me say it at once," said the good old man—"one who had not mastered the science of life when in health, so as to preserve her soul in peace even under heavy trials,

would have no chance now. If Mrs. Frank Thetford lives, she will owe it to her religion."

"Then she will live!" pronounces Edith quickly. And the doctor and Mrs. Thetford smile.

"This is not a night to sleep," Edith says; "I can stay up here."

"Shall I send nurse to bed?"

"Oh yes," cries Edith—"you and I! We will watch her this night together."

"At least, we will make nurse lie down in a room close by, and we will call her if she is wanted."

So Helen is laid at rest, the room darkened, and all in perfect peace; and the two who love her sit in that little room, not far from the open door; and with noiseless steps, Mrs. Thetford crosses to the bedside from time to time, and makes thanksgiving; for Helen sleeps.

At last, through the long night they have waited, and the clock strikes seven again; and Edith drops on her knees silently, and whispers, "the twelve hours are past."

And she says no more, because her tears tell all that is in her heart, and they flow without restraint. Mrs. Thetford does not check them. She does not tell the weeping, kneeling, sobbing girl, whose head is buried in her hands, that she is over-fatigued with sitting up, and that she must immediately go to bed; but she kneels down by Edith's side, and they raise their hands and cross their breasts, and say, "We praise thee, O God." And when their offering and their prayers are over, she says, "Now you will not like to go away, so sit here on this low-cushioned chair, place your feet on this footstool—try to rest: nurse will be here soon, and then I will do the same." So she throws a shawl about Edith, and makes her cushions comfortable, and in less than half an hour she sleeps like an infant in its cradle—at first a few sighs and sobbing breath, but soon profoundest rest and peace.

And Edith sleeps long—almost till noonday is come.

When she wakes she finds the door leading into the sick room shut. That good Mrs. Thetford, whom the world has always, and consistently, passed by as merely a motherly woman—she is sitting by the window, reading

Thomas à Kempis, and occasionally pausing, and shutting her eyes, and making little mental prayers.

Edith waked up slowly, and looked at her; and shut her eyes, to open them and look again. There she sat by the drawn-down blinds, and the sun came into the room and rested on the things around her with a steady, cloudless light; and the clock ticked, and all else was still; and Edith knew in her heart that Helen was getting well.

At last she announced the fact of her being awake, and Mrs. Thetford helped her to get up. She was stiff, and could not stand without help, so she leaned on Mrs. Thetford's arm for a moment, till her powers should return. Her eyes rested on a kneeling-stool close to Mrs. Thetford's chair, and on its shelf there lay an open book, and by its side a crucifix. A smile in Edith's face asked leave, and then, still holding the kind supporting arm, she stooped with one knee on the kneeling-stool, and read from the open page.

As she read, Edith looked back on the face that had nothing of the wonderful, or the deeply-feeling, or the very attractive in it—she looked back on its steady light, and solemn thoughts sprang up.

Then Edith read in a soft voice—almost mournfully she read—and still as she spoke the words she looked back again and again; and Mrs. Thetford never resisted or interrupted her, but gave her support, and let her have her way.

"I love thee, O my well-beloved," read that young girl on her knees; "Thou hast given me Thy cross for my resting-place. I stretch forth my arm for Thy treasures; and suffering and contempt I welcome and embrace. To this Thou wast born, and in this Thou didst live and die. It was given Thee by thy Father—to me also, O——" Her eyes are on that calm, still, consenting face. Her voice falters—"I cannot say that prayer," she says. And Mrs. Thetford lifts her up, and draws her towards her with a tender smile, and leads her to the chair by her own seat, and Edith almost feels as if again a mother's arm embraced her.

"Yes, Edith," she said, sweetly, "you can; you do."

But Edith shook her head.

"Tell me," said Mrs. Thetford.

"It is asking for it," said Edith; "I can't do that. The world has never seemed to shake beneath me until now, and now that trial is passing—I can now be thankful—but *you*, you *ask* for suffering."

"No, Edith; I have never asked for it. It came—it is present now. It came, and I made it welcome; that is all; that *you* would have done; that you *will* do, if hereafter the world not only shakes beneath you, but is laid in a wreck around. You can do so now in anticipation. You shudder, perhaps, but that is because it is not here. You have grace for to-day, and are faithful to it. If the morrow is terrible, still there will come the strength for it; and then, as now, you have only to be faithful."

"Are you unhappy?" said Edith. And then, blushing, she begged pardon, and asked not to be answered. But she was answered with a smiling face,—

"I have had what are called great trials—some are abiding trials, trials which are not to be outlived in this world—but I am not unhappy; unhappiness ceases when the heart has learnt that prayer."

"I should be unhappy; I should not get over trials as you have," said Edith quickly. But Mrs. Thetford only smiled more brightly than before.

"No, no, Edith; inconsolable sorrows are not for loving hearts. Don't you remember?"—and she quoted from her favourite book: "He gives all for all, and has all in all. He flies, runs, and rejoices. He is free and is not held; feels no burden, values no labours; when sleeping, slumbers not; when weary is not tired; when straitened is not constrained; when frightened is not disturbed."

"Yes," answered Edith, and going on with the passage—" 'Like a lively flame, and a torch all on fire, mounts upwards and securely passes through all opposition'—yes, that is the description of a loving heart. I see something more than I did—my day and my strength will come together—it did come so yesterday; I think I could have said that prayer yesterday, when with the poor people in the church."

"If the chalice is offered to you," said Mrs. Thetford, gravely, "you will not turn away."

The tears rushed up to Edith's eyes, but she pressed that good friend's hand, and said earnestly "Amen."

That evening again saw Edith and her father at their own home. Lady Sarah met them in the hall.

"Thank you for sending to me in the morning," she said to Sir Godfrey; "I am almost as thankful as you are, I think." Then, turning to Edith, she took her arm and said—"And what have you been doing?"

"Reading poetry," said Edith, with a face of wonderful meaning; and Lady Sarah's face grew brighter, and she understood in a moment what Edith meant.

So she walked up-stairs with her niece, and they stood before the dressing-table together, and dismissed the servant, and then Lady Sarah said, "And what book was it, Edith?"

"The wide-open book that all eyes see; but——"

"But in which only wise and understanding hearts can read," added Lady Sarah. "Yes, Edith, I am very glad that you have used that book, and learned its language; you are wiser than you were."

"Do you remember saying to me once something to this effect,—that I might enjoy heraldry, and genealogy, and all the things I love so much—that I might enjoy them safely, *because I was a Catholic?*"

"I forget; but I might have done so."

"I understand that now perfectly well. By themselves they are snares. I liked it all so much that I could not stand aside from the very midst of them, when bade to do so; and so I fell. There are all sorts of old things at Thetford. It is a more living kind of age than we have here. Here things were dead or asleep—there has been no cessation of life there. I have not fallen in love with old things there; but I have been taken captive by the thought of life—life which knows no age, no infirmity, no death. A few fashions have changed, but it is playing with toys to pause upon them—the pleasure of idle hours. The great idea is Life; Sameness; the unalterable atmosphere of Piety; the perpetual spring of the same flowers

in different hearts. I went about the house, aunt, saying, 'As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be,'—and then there is a world there; a world of strife and noise, hard labour, and quick thought; a world of toil by day and by night; a ceaseless trouble of the body; and yet, all of One heart, and One hope—all like One mighty Soul anchored on the rock. And there are splendid old family portraits. And they look down on those who are but, as it were, the reproductions and reflections of themselves. And when one dies, and is seen among the living no more, but has his place among the watchers on the wall, still they are One—not a link in that chain is broken; not a flaw in the faith—'As it was in the beginning, is now'—O, aunt, there is no poetry like the poetry that belongs to those who have kept the faith. Cannot you fancy some great guardian angel saying of that house, 'Of those whom thou hast given me I have lost none?' There is no such praise as that. I have read a new page in history, and I am going to walk humbly all the days of my life."

The evening began with the peaceful joy of thankful hearts whom Heaven makes glad. Then a carriage drove to the door, and they had hardly time to exchange a look with each other before Lady and Miss Mercer were announced. Edith's face grew positively red. But the trial was quickly over. Sir Godfrey, with the smile which was the hereditary beauty of that long line of courtly sires and conscious dames, had taken Eleanor's hand, and looking from her to her mother, and from her mother to her, was telling her, in gentle accents, that he gave her joy, wished her happiness, and could assure her that even so lovely a mistress must be satisfied in so magnificent a home.

Eleanor did really look very beautiful, and very happy; and, turning her exquisite face towards Edith, she said, "La! how kind. Now, I do really think!"

Then leaving Sir Godfrey to her mother, she answered Edith's less perfect congratulations by saying, "Yes, he is very nice, isn't he? And his hair curls, too; so nice, isn't it?"

So Edith said that Angus's hair *did* curl, and was *very* nice. And then Lady Sarah rather gravely, and with a little formality, hoped Miss Mercer would be as happy as such brilliant prospects seemed to warrant; and Eleanor had nothing to say to Lady Sarah, but looked down, and uttered an odd "Oh, yes; thank you!" and the room all at once grew silent.

So, after an effort or two at being comfortable, Lady Mercer recollected that the evening was passing away, and that they would be late home, and they said "Good-bye."

But Aunt Sarah's face was very stiff and formal-looking for some time; so much so, that when her niece made the customary pause by the bed-room door to say "Good night," she was further moved to say "I want to ask you something."

"Come in," said the aunt.

And the niece waited till Martha was gone. Then, sitting on a sofa by the dear aunt's side, who was all attention and gentle wonder, she said, "Were you ever going to be married, Aunt Sarah?"

Now Edith, if you ever thought that dear aunt stiff and cold when you wanted her to be just the contrary, you are fully revenged. But she recovers herself.

"I must know—I *must* know. I *will*; I *ought*. We have been long enough together; you can trust me, and I ought to be trusted. Speak; speak, Aunt Sarah; for I am wanting to know very much—very, *very* much!"

"Yes, Edith; when I was about your age——"

"That is not so *very* long ago—you are not old," says Edith.

"When I was about your age I knew a person, older by twenty years than I was, and he was not very old——"

"Thirty-eight," reckons Edith.

"I was like a captive in his hands. I so admired him, I so desired to please him, I was so happy to make him happy—it was the glory of my life to be admired by him."

Edith listened with open mouth. Lady Sarah spoke very quietly, but she meant her niece to understand that she felt very deeply.

"And—" Lady Sarah went on, "and I promised to marry him; and it seemed necessary to the happiness of both. I had no father or mother; I had a guardian, an aged priest, and he forbade it. I should have been my own mistress at twenty-one——"

"Why? why?" asked Edith.

"He was a Protestant,—he was Angus Macdonnel's father."

A very prolonged "Oh!" fell from Edith.

"I was not unlike you, Edith, in a certain——"

"Wilfulness," suggests Edith.

"Well—at least I fought very hard. I did not give it up till I had nearly broken that holy man's heart, I think, with my obstinacy—till he had nearly cast me off—till he sent me away, and would no longer argue the case with me. Then the father did just as the son has lately done,—was engaged and married in a pet. I went to stay in Scotland. I met old friends and relations of Mr. Macdonnel. They did not know the name of the listener, and they talked of me. They lamented the opportunity lost—the opportunity of Protestantizing Tregenna. Do you recollect what you said to me before tea about Thetford Royals?"

"Yes; I am so glad you gave him up."

"I took a journey of four hundred miles to thank that faithful priest, whom I had often accused of breaking my young heart and making me miserable."

"Just like you; I am glad. You never saw Mr. Macdonnel again?"

"Never. And his son does not much resemble him; only the voice, the manner, the impulsive things he says."

"Tell me more," said Edith.

"There is no more—only, perhaps,—I say *perhaps*, Edith,—as I would not do my duty till I felt in a manner forced to do it—as I did not make a loving sacrifice of my will to God, he has not blessed me with the other vocation. I never thought of marriage with any one else; but when I went to a convent to seek His will farther, I found I had no vocation, and so——"



"And so you are here reserved to bless me, and guide me, and be my dearest companion, and——"

But Lady Sarah interrupted her, and said, "So I am hard, and soured, and not always what a woman should be, Edith, and you have thought me so?"

But Edith did not consent to that; she was quite sure that Aunt Sarah was the most delightful darling that ever lived.

The next morning there came a confirmation of Helen Thetford's recovery; and the morning after the messenger brought a note.

"For me!" Edith exclaimed. And Edith read, "Will you give my love to your father?" It was in Helen's writing. And Edith cried out, "Yes, with all my heart!" and she took it to Sir Godfrey triumphantly.

All things seemed going smoothly and happily, when one morning Edith found her aunt alone in the library, notes and writing-materials all around her.

"I won't interrupt you," she said; "another time will do." But her aunt would not let her go. She called her back, and they stood by the window together.

"Will you call on Mrs. Flasher, Edith?"

"Oh, yes, gladly; papa went yesterday." There was a pause.

"And so you love the sea?" said Lady Sarah, dreamily.

Edith looked up surprised.

"You do?" asked her aunt.

"I do; I do. More than I can tell, I love it. I said good bye to it sadly the last morning at Thetford. I went out by myself. I sat on the short fragrant grass of the beautiful cliffs. The sea was like a thing asleep. The trail of the rowing-boats stayed on its surface. The great ships, far off, never moved for hours; but were still, with their sails set, like children's toys. There was the lazy sound of the waves that heaved themselves up on the beach, and rolled back languidly, and just as if they could never get up power enough to rise again, only that they *must* obey; and so their soft music came again and again, and tempted me to stay and listen, and count them, like

the breathings of a living thing. Oh, yes, Aunt Sarah, I love the sea—but what is this?”

Her aunt held a note towards her. It was from Mr. Trotman to Lady Sarah. It said that the ship that their son had sailed in was lost; and Cavendish was dead. “Madam,” said the father, “I thank you for doing as one of the world would not have done. I thank you for the happiness of the last evening that my son spent with us. I thank you for behaving better than I did, for I was angry when he told me of the act of a confused and dazzled judgment. It comforts my sorrowful heart to accuse myself and to thank you; and you who were merciful then will be sympathising now.”

“Were there many lost?” Edith asked, closing her eyes and leaning on her aunt’s arm. And then she added, “And I, too, thank you.”

“Yes; above a hundred. Capt. Forrest has been telling all that is known to your father. Capt. Forrest is going to India. He is considered fit for service. He goes to Sydney first for a year, I think, and then to India. Frank Dawson is going to Sydney with him. The young man is going to try to see his father.”

“Why?” asked Edith.

“Well; if he can do him good—why not? He has to tell of his wife’s death, of having been received into the Church. He goes out with a worthy young man. I admire Capt. Forrest. He is unassuming, and always pleasant, and does a great deal of good silently. He is not of the kind who only act best when the world looks on. I dare say that the world will know more of him one day.”

“We shall feel changed,” said Edith, sorrowfully.

“I have a plan, Edith,” said Lady Sarah; “your father has half consented.”

“What is it?”

“If I had promised, subject to your father’s permission, to build and endow a church here, as a thank-offering for Helen Thetford’s life—if I had done that, Edith?”

Edith looked up. “I should thank you during my whole life.”

"But, if so, we can't live here during the noise and bustle of building. Your father wants to have the church close to the house, and I——"

"What do *you* want?"

"I want to go to Rome."

"Oh, aunt; if *you* leave me, I shall faint!"

"But I am going to take you; and your father must come too. Father Maynard can manage the building. And the Thetfords can join us; and your father can be married there; and you—you, Edith,—you know you love the sea—and you shall watch it from the heights of my old Welch castle!"

"I don't know about that," said Edith, smiling. "I cannot give up the happiness of seeing my father with Lady Mortimer by his side. I must live in their world, if I have lost my own."

"I only mean that you should visit Tregenna, my darling child," said Lady Sarah. "I intend you to have a world of your own again; another world, a healthier world, and yet your own."

Four years passed by. Edith had arrived at the very solemn age of twenty-two. It had been read in the newspaper, firstly, that the wife of Sir Godfrey Mortimer had been received by bonfires and other demonstrations at Mortimer Manor; also that—but an enemy did that—that Popery was again raising its head in Steeple-hill. Further, that a son and daughter had been born to the illustrious house; and, at last, that at court there had been a presentation of Miss Mortimer, by Lady Sarah Tregenna. The return from the continent was thus made known, and Steeple-hill read of feathers and pearls with an unspeakable satisfaction.

Sir Godfrey and Lady Mortimer went to London. He had not seen his child for three years. She stood before him one of the most beautiful women the world ever saw. And Lady Sarah was so wonderfully changed. She was never "hard" now; that light that Edith had often looked for, and only found at times, dwelt habitually on her face. Her brother looked at her till his eyes grew

moist; he seemed to know what that radiant sweetness meant, and he was reverential in its presence. It was a long embrace that Edith and Helen bestowed upon each other,—each so loved and admired the other; for Helen was all that even Edith could have desired in Lady Mortimer. But Edith was happiest when a small sweet voice, proceeding from a young gentleman in a white frock, declared that he was Montague Mortimer, and that she was his sister Edith. “And I never saw you before,” says Montague, with *the* smile lighting his face so that Edith cannot restrain a glance of pleasure at her father—“and I never saw you before; but I know you very well, for you come in my prayers every day, and you are in my picture mass-book; and I love you very much; and you are taller than mamma; and I have another sister, small, smaller than I am, and she is called Clara—do you know that?”

Edith says that she knows, and she is called “*big sister*” from that time, and taken very close to the heart of the young Montague, who is, without any question, the most wonderful child that ever was seen. The world begins to talk about Edith, and Edith, who almost thought that her life was over at eighteen, finds that it has only just begun. The world talks of Edith, because the monster has a thousand tongues, and to use them all at once is the chiefest of its signs of life. But the world does not approach too near to this new heroine, for, in spite of itself, its heart quakes, and it cannot help respecting her. Only those whom that pure heart approves can come within that heart’s attraction—not many; but that does not matter.

• Lady Sarah goes with Sir Godfrey and his family to Mortimer Manor. There Edith beholds children’s toys lying about, and she laughs. A miniature railway courses along beneath the grave glance of her great-great grandmother; and Sir Montague’s chamber is the nursery; and infant voices whisper the “Hail, Mary;” and the baby points her finger to the motto on the morion and cries, “There! there!” And then Edith folds the child in her

arms, and says, "Yes; there, there!" and "Here, here." And she loves the sound of their prattling voices, and is very glad that old things live again, and that life goes on at the dear old manor. She is intensely happy. She is the safest of monitresses, and the dearest of the children's playfellows. She tells the most wonderful stories, and sings the sublimest of songs. The whole village feels the influence of the Manor House. The people are more real, and less given to "make an appearance." Happy faces and contented hearts become the fashion. It is not considered necessary to toil after things that only *LOOK well*. The people live better and die happier; and though the church built by Lady Sarah is not very small, it is not unfrequently full.

A certain Lord —— makes Edith an offer. He is a Catholic. But Edith says "No." Lady Sarah, on inquiry, found that her niece entertained romantic notions about love; has the highest respect for my lord, and does not love him. Then Lady Sarah, with a marvellously brilliant face, assured herself by catechism, that Edith fully understood the whole theory of marrying without love. Still Edith refused the gentleman. And so passed one whole year and part of another. She is approaching twenty-four; and surely she is not going to be a nun.

All at once, it so happened, that rockets and fireworks went off at Worrel, and great guns too—as great as they could get. The village of Steeple-hill caught the infection, and did as Worrel did; only more and better, if possible. And Mrs. Bright had a fainting-fit, and Mrs. Flasher wore her best clothes, and the Trotmans congratulated everybody, and the country generally, and Steeple-hill and themselves in particular; and at Mortimer Manor they were serenely happy; and "Sir Henry Forrest for ever" was the popular cry. There had been hard battles and great deeds in India, and he had won a soldier's honours and renown. He had returned, and with him Frank Dawson and an old man whose misdeeds were forgotten and forgiven. But though Sir Henry had faced great terrors, he could not face Edith. He positively fled;

ran away like a coward—it was more than his country expected of him, and he explained his case to Sir Godfrey.

Somehow or other—Edith told me herself that she never knew how—she was very happy, and engaged to marry Sir Henry. It really was very happy. Her future husband was good, and great, and faithful; for he had always loved her. And he had now won her well, if silently; and she crowned his rewards. Mr. Stangrove, who had added to his riches by marrying his ward Olivia Reinecourt, said that he had always known how it would be, and had told Angus so. And so they were married; and they went on their wedding tour to Tregenna; and the Quaker was gone, and Lady Sarah was ready to receive them.

Tregenna was a thing by itself—not like Mortimer Manor, nor Thetford Royals; but a thing by itself—a fortress. Everything was there that Edith loved, and all that the soldier admired; and there, too, was the ancient faith.

One evening—it was a solemn sort of evening—Lady Sarah was even unusually delightful, unusually happy, and blooming beautiful; and she paused on the gallery above stairs, as they were going to their rooms, as she had so often done in the old times at the Manor.

“Good night—good night”—she held Edith’s hand a moment longer. Over her face came a look of unutterable joy. “Thank God for all that He has done for me, and let us praise His name for ever. Good night.”

Edith felt something at her heart. “What—what is it—Aunt Sarah?”

Aunt Sarah gave one quiet radiant smile, and passed on.

“Her face is like an angel’s,” said Edith to herself.

But next morning at breakfast there was no Lady Sarah. She had left the house very early. The servant brought in a note, and Lady Forrest read it. It was a long farewell. In Edith’s society, in her dear companionship, in the great interest she had awakened, she had found the cure for those little asperities which many had seen, but no one had really suffered from.

That other vocation had been granted to her ; and when next Lady Sarah was seen, it was in the habit of the religious. Purer and brighter—all joy and love !

“ Oh, Aunt Sarah ! Aunt Sarah ! how could you give Tregenna, and all its great responsibilities, to such a creature as I am ? ”

“ It is all safe,” says the nun. “ Safe with you, and you are safe with it. You will not tarnish its great history, and that history will be no snare now. To make you simple-minded enough to manage great things I have watched you, scolded you, praised you, and lived with you—it is done ; good bye ! ”



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